Portrait painting Lesson 7

Famous Artists Painting Course Inc.

Westport, Connecticut

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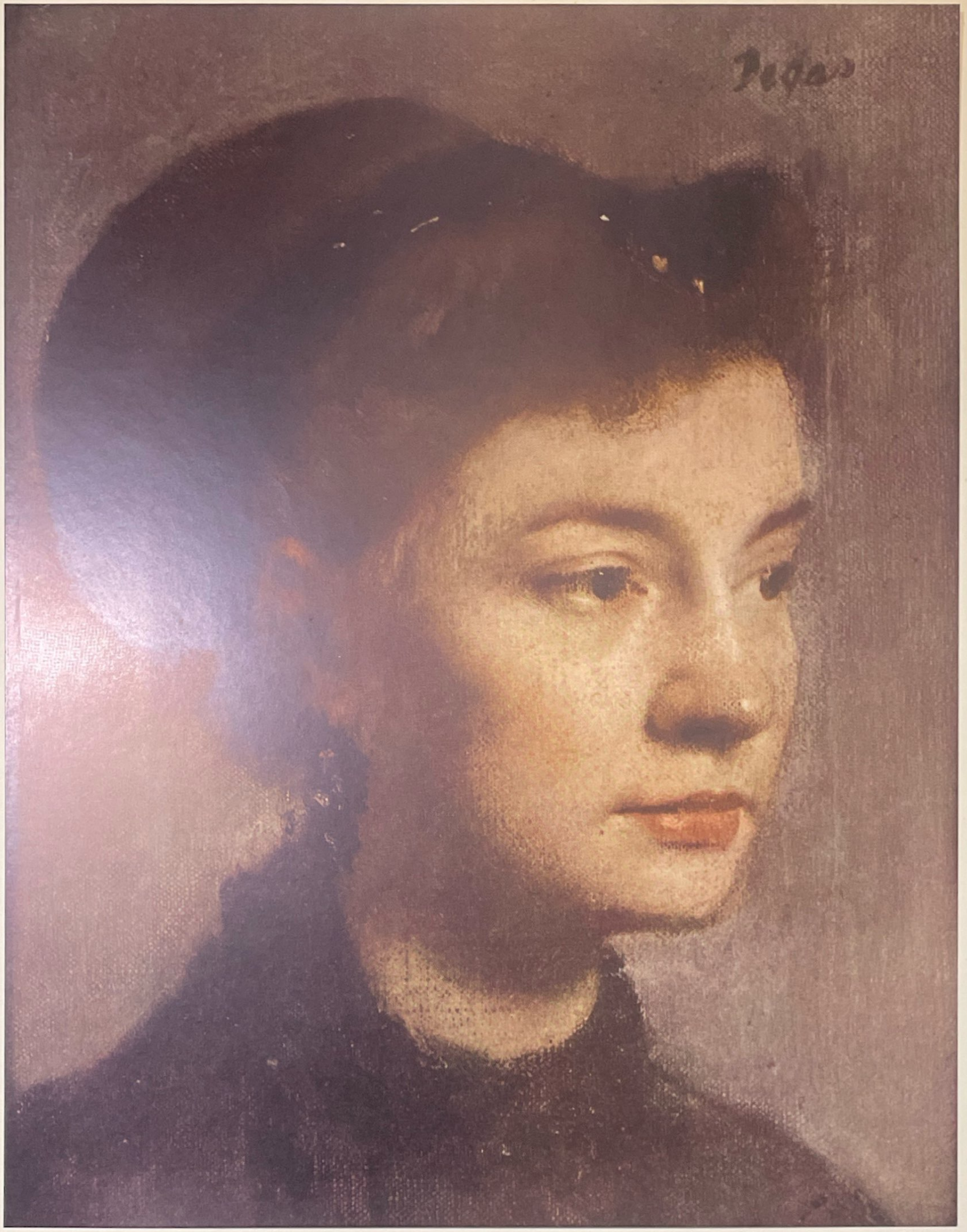


EDGAR DEGAS
Head of a Young Woman
The Louvre

The air of quiet vivacity which distinguishes this *Head of a Young Woman* by Degas seems to belong to the subject's features and expression, yet it is due also to the flow of light and dark, in an unbroken rhythm, around the head. In these shadows Degas perceived a series of simply curving shapes which reveal the essentials of the form and swallow up distracting details. Above all it is in the blending of edges, with pigment coaxed from tone to tone via the grainy texture of the canvas, that Degas reveals his superb skill.

Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art

PICASSO. Gertrude Stein

In making this portrait of his good friend Gertrude Stein, Picasso sought to achieve a strong statement of personality. Notice how face and hands, the two most revealing elements, are modeled clearly as forms; the remainder of the figure and the background create a simple pattern of shapes.

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
(Chester Dale Collection)

RENOIR.
Girl with a Watering Can

Renoir succeeded in capturing the forthright charm of this little girl by emphasizing her deep blue eyes, her peaches-and-cream complexion, her soft blonde hair, and the delicate working in her dress. Appropriately, he painted her against a background of quiet curves and dainty patterns of flowers.

Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art

VAN GOGH. L'Arlesienne

In a sense every Van Gogh portrait combines indistinguishable characteristics of both subject and painter. The artist seeks primarily to set down his emotional reaction to the sitter; he redesigns shapes and colors for expressive purposes. Here low-keyed blues, greens, and reds are set against a brilliant yellow background, and silhouetted shapes are patterned to contrast with the impassivity of the features.

The portrait

In the lesson on Human Form our object was to see how the human body is constructed, what the relationship of the separate parts is, and how these parts work together in a marvelously versatile and balanced organism.

But there is more to the human being than mass, and more than bone and muscle; there is also that indefinable quality called *personality* which so unmistakably distinguishes one individual from another. In this lesson on the Portrait we will see how various parts which are basically similar in all individuals differ in detail from one person to another. It is the purpose of the artist, in making a portrait, to observe and emphasize these peculiarities which create personal character.

To most people the definition of a portrait seems a simple matter. A portrait, by common consent, is a likeness of the individual who sits for it. Even the law of the land protects the subject in this regard. If you have commissioned a portrait with the understanding that it shall resemble you, you cannot be required to pay for it on completion unless you are satisfied that it really "looks like you." This fact puts the professional portraitist in a difficult spot. He may see qualities in his patron which he would like to record in paint—qualities of appearance or personality which especially intrigue him. But, by necessity, he must paint what his patron sees in the mirror, rather than what *he* sees in his patron. The result is often nothing more than a superficial likeness which may or may not communicate to any real degree what the personality of the sitter is really like.

For this reason our finest and most sensitive artists usually hesitate to accept portrait commissions, and in any case they are unlikely to undertake a portrait until they have become well acquainted with the sitter and have discovered bonds of sympathy. Almost always the best portraits are those of the artist's family and friends. That is what we should expect. For these

Museu de Arte, São Paulo, Brazil

MODIGLIANI. Leopold Zborowski

Modigliani achieved striking likenesses in his portraits, even though he saw all people in terms of his own flat patterns of lines and shapes. These patterns he arranged within designs of delightful subtlety and elegance. In the end, despite likeness, the portrait becomes more an expression of the artist's personality than the subject's.

Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art

VAN DYKE.
Portrait of the Duke of Richmond

This formal, official portrait is typical of a tradition of professional portraiture which survives to our day. The emphasis is on likeness and elegance; the artist is often at as much pains to display the technical virtuosity of his brush as his client is to display the wealth and refinement of his person and background.

AUGUSTE RENOIR
Madame Henriot
Collection Dr. and Mrs. David M. Levy, New York

Renoir expressed the ethereal appeal of *Madame Henriot*, an actress of the Comédie Francaise, by treating her face as a radiant reflector of light. Only an Impressionist with an eye trained to detect the most subtle fluctuations of light across a surface could have succeeded in capturing the rounded reality of the portrait through such a delicate variation of warm and cool tints. With the exception of the pearly shadows around the nose and the alternately blurred and defined edges in the warm brown hair, modeling was completely suppressed. It was for the eyes with their surprising darkness and intensity that the artist reserved his climactic note, to which all else is subordinated.

are the individuals the artist knows best; and they are the subjects likely to be most understanding if, for his own expressive reasons, he finds it desirable to depart from a photographic likeness in the interests of clearer, more forceful statement.

A photographic likeness is certainly one kind of portrait. But it is by no means the only kind, and may well be less successful in capturing the true personality of the subject than a painting in which likeness is not the primary objective. We are therefore justified in defining portraiture more broadly.

In this more inclusive sense, a portrait would be any painting inspired by a particular individual whose essential character the artist is attempting to reflect in his canvas. This definition could encompass a wide variety of approaches: an impersonally objective study of the sitter; a free interpretation of the subject's personality, without destruction of basic physical resemblance; or even a purely subjective expression in paint of the artist's personal reaction to the sitter.

In drawing your family and friends you may want to experiment with all these different approaches to the portrait, but clearly it is best to begin with an attempt to put down the physical likeness. Then, if you wish, you can go on to freer, more subjective presentation. This method Picasso has followed frequently. It is always easier to create variations on a theme you have once stated clearly, than it is to create variations and later attempt to define the theme.

Heads and hands

Think of anyone you know – and you automatically think of his or her face. The simple fact is, that the face identifies and sets apart every single individual on earth as well as ourselves. Our own face is just as much a part of our personality as our emotions, our thoughts, our likes and our dislikes. These characteristics show plainly to others, whether we think so or not. We think of, and constantly judge, those we do or do not know by what we see in their faces and we cannot deny that in these faces we are moved by feelings of love, hatred, amusement, disgust and pity – in fact, *all* the emotions can be observed and felt. Be wary of that person in whose face you do not "feel" or "see" any emotional qualities.

While all faces have a great deal in common, it is easy to place them in different classes: the broad, the lean, the round, the flat, the strong, the weak, the ugly and the beautiful.

Therefore, to bring the human figure to its highest point of expression in art, we must first consider the head. In most pictures it is the focal point of all attention and through its attitude and expression is found the quickest means of communication – bridging the gap between the subject who has been painted and the person who views the picture.

Let us consider the face as an assembly of bone, gristle, skin and blood, topped by a head of hair which can be artificially kept short, as in men, or allowed to grow long and kept in local fashion, as in women.

The centuries have taught women to make the most of their hair and to use it as a means of decoration to frame the face. As fashions have changed with the passing of time and dictated changes in hair style and color, she has made the most of it – as have the successful artists who have painted her. The custom, for the man, has generally been to cut the hair short at frequent intervals, so that it served as a covering over the top of the head and the back of the skull. However, even in these short croppings, men also adhered to the style dictated by the period. Poets, throughout history, have written about and sung of the beauty and color of women's hair. Indeed, some of the most beautiful lines ever written have been of the quality and texture of the hair.

Directly beneath the forehead, the eyebrows follow the upper ridge lines of the eye sockets. Beautiful eyebrows have always been admired, though, as with hair, styles have always changed with different periods of fashion – always to enhance the beauty of the face. Shaggy eyebrows have always been looked upon as a sign of virility in young men and authority in old age.

The eyes are the most expressive feature of the face. When the eyes are closed or hidden, the most vital impact of the face is lost and most means of expression are gone. Generally, beautiful eyes are not set close together, nor are they small or too deep-set. The eyes can sometimes tell, more vividly than words, our emotions and moods, and usually we can tell these emotions even against the will of the subject who does not wish us to know his feelings. The eyes can, more than any other feature of the face, betray all the emotions from hatred, contempt, indignation – to love, tragedy and joy, in fact, almost every human emotion can be seen and transmitted through the eyes.

In drawing a beautiful woman, a small, but an elegantly shaped nose is an essential requirement. While some liberties may be taken as to type, it must still be well shaped to conform with a beautiful and delicate face. In drawing a handsome man, many liberties can be taken with the size and prominence of his nose. Even when drawing characters, men or women, care should be taken that, no matter what the general character of the subject, the nose takes its place in proper relationship to the other

Albertina Museum, Vienna

RUBENS. Rubens' Son Nicholas
In its sensitivity and charm this little portrait fairly sums up the personality of childhood

features of the face. The nose can be used very successfully to help portray and develop many human characteristics and types.

Just as the nose lies between and in front of the cheeks, the ears lie directly behind them. The shape of the ear varies mostly at the top and the bottom. At the top it may look like a high or shallow arch and the turning of the rim may be broad or narrow. The bottom of the ear forms a lobe or it may simply join the neck without one. The ear has often been compared to a seashell due to its whorls and convolutions. Drawing the ears properly is quite tricky and takes considerable study and practice.

Next to the eyes, the most expressive feature of the face is the mouth. The easiest way to consider the mouth is in repose when its normal shape can be most easily studied. The mouth in movement can denote many emotions. The lips, turned slightly upwards at the outer ends, may show good humor – when turned down they denote unhappiness or melancholy. They can denote determination or frustration, or they can signify, without words, the desire to be kissed as well as to show distaste. The mouth laughs – it cries – it shouts – it whispers – it sings. As well as in its shape, the beauty of the mouth lies partly in its color. In women, the soft appealing red lips, as well as the beautiful eyes, are the characteristics that provoke sex appeal in pictures – as well as in real life. Both narrow and broad mouths can be beautiful, depending on their proportion to the rest of the face. The shape of the mouth may also decidedly show character in both men and women. The broad mouth usually denotes generosity and friendliness – the thin mouth, pettiness of nature. These assumptions are not always true, but in making pictures, they do show character.

The chin can have a marked effect upon the character of the face. When it juts forward and is pronounced, it can give a feeling of aggressiveness and determination. When it recedes, it can denote a lack of strength. In women, the rounded chin is considered more desirable. In general, a prominent line of the jaw is more desirable in a man than in a woman.

The head is finally set on the neck – the flexible pillar which enables it to turn from side to side. The shape of the neck varies greatly in individuals. It may be long or short, thin or fat. In the female, owing to the lack of any great muscular development, it is usually round and smooth. In the male, and especially in athletic and old men, it will show well defined and prominent muscles. These are much more pronounced when the neck is in action.

In summation of this introduction to your lesson – we say, a head is not just a shape; it is a living, breathing thing with motive and character which you must like or dislike – agree with or disagree with. There is no such thing as an inanimate body or limb (except a dead one – and even then, it must *look* dead). A head laughs, cries, sings – shows surprise and anger. It must be either fat, thin, long, square, round, mean, kind or ornery. All the emotions and types we think of are there. You either like or dislike – or even not care about them – *but* it must always create some form of reaction in you. Even when asleep, the head must show either repose or the fact that the subject is having a good or bad dream – but it must show – because you *must feel* that you are drawing a living, breathing thing.

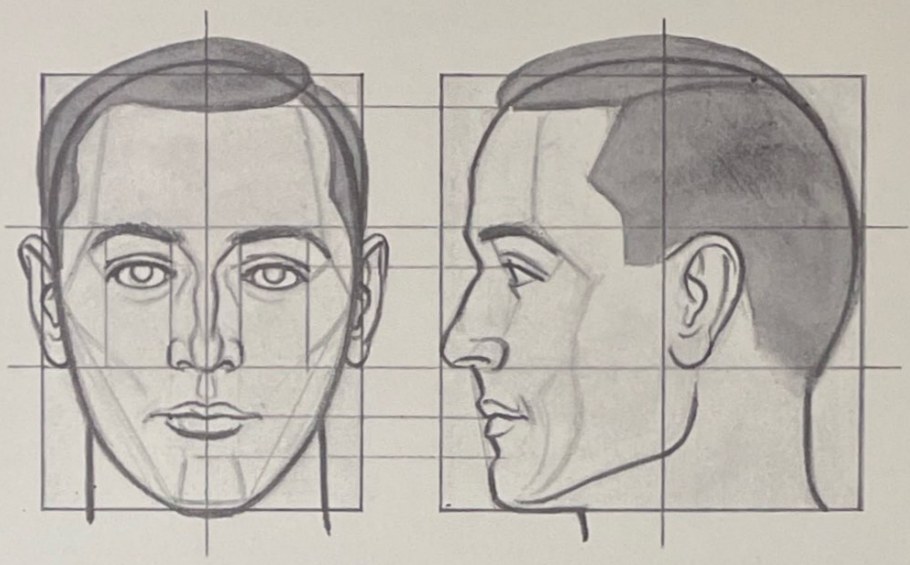
The same point of view will apply to the hand or the position of the body. The hands, for example, can show tension, relaxation, joy, sorrow, anger, repose, age and character. The head should prove age to within a few years, whether it be a child or an old man.

To get back to the head and hands as we examine their relation to each other. Stand in front of a mirror – look at yourself. Then frown, then smile, cry, laugh, look mean, look happy, look sly, look sick. Try to act these emotions out – and *feel* what is happening to your hands. You find that your hands unconsciously go through the same emotions. You cannot, for example, get really mad without clenching your fists, or feel completely reposed without your hands relaxing. We give you this to condition your mind in its approach to drawing this – the most important phase of all art – the human equation.

Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art

HANS HOLBEIN THE YOUNGER. The Lady Meutas

This unfinished sketch shows how simple the means a great artist requires to capture not only a likeness, but also a penetrating statement of personality.



Constructing the head — blocking in

In blocking in the head and planes of the face, let us first begin by observing the proportions of the head. As the oval is generally used for the basis of starting, let us divide the oval head and place all the features in their proper relationship to one another. We first divide the head into three equal parts — from the top of the head to the eyebrows is one-third the distance, from the eyebrows to the nostrils is the next third — and for the last third we go to the point of the chin. Now draw a line down the center of the head from the top to the bottom.

We now place the eyes two-thirds up on the center area and on each side of the nose. The distance between the eyes should be the length of one eye. The length of the ear is about the same as the nose and is on a line with it. When the head is seen in profile, the ear is just above the middle of the neck. The bottom of the lower lip is halfway between the bottom of the nose and the chin. The top of the nose starts at the upper lid of the eye. The width of the nose at the nostrils is the width of one eye. When seen in profile, the distance from the tip of the nose to where the nostril unites with the cheek is also about the length of one eye. The distance from the chin to the throat is equal to the space between the mouth and the bottom of the chin. After a while and with practice, proportions of the head and its features will become instinctive and you will sense their right positions on the head when it is turned in perspective or in a foreshortened position.

At this point it is well to remember that "blocking in," whether it be features, planes, forms or establishing attitudes, should always be done sketchily and lightly so that when you are ready to draw the finished result, the blocking in lines can be easily erased.

The hair line is very important in the blocking in process as it very definitely marks the difference in the sexes and should be done early in the drawing. Note that in the male, blocking in the hair immediately establishes a masculine, angular appearance, while in the female, it sets the softer oval shape to the face which is distinctly feminine. A similar change is seen in the jaw. In the male the jaw is more definitely squared, giving it an angular masculine appearance, while in the female, we usually keep the jaw line soft and round.

Study the obvious difference in the hair line of the male and female as well as the change in the lines of the jaw.

Portrait painting

The cheeks should also conform with the general character of the outline of the head, beginning from the bony area just in front of the ears on each side that mark the greatest fullness of the face and running down to the outside of the chin. In men, they should be more or less vertical, conforming with the outline and squareness of the jaw; in women, they should follow the oval outline of the face.

Another point of distinction between the sexes is the eyebrows; they should be positioned before the other features. Like the hairline, the brows show a definite difference betwen male and female. Some brows are thick, some thin, some are straight and others arched, all asserting themselves differently and having their own personal characteristics. You will also note that the woman's eyebrows are usually farther apart than the man's and that they arch slightly upward; in the man, they are closer together at the top of the nose and then arch downward around the eyes.

The features of the face all have their individual structure and should be carefully studied one by one. We will consider and work with each one separately later in the lesson.

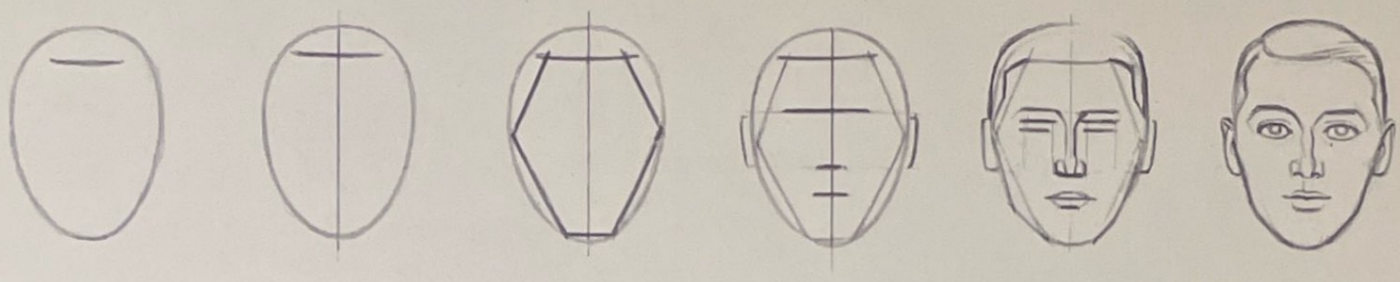
Considering the head as a whole, though we begin with the oval premise, it is not as smooth and rounded as a first glance seems to indicate. Instead, it has many depressions and ridges caused by the skull and affecting the surface form. This form is also affected by the swell of the muscles under the skin. These depressions and ridges mark the planes of the head and knowledge of them is of the greatest importance in enabling you to understand the relation of modeling detailed features to the mass as a whole form.

Early in the study of drawing, you, as the student, must learn to mentally appreciate *all the planes that surround the head,* although, from any given point of view, only certain ones will be visible. This conscious understanding of the planes will enable you to understand much more readily the three essentials that will help you make a good drawing. First, the action of the head, second, its basic construction and third, the character and type of the person you are drawing.

Six basic planes compose the head, five of which are visible. They are the top, the front, the back and the sides, with the last and sixth being hidden by the entrance of the throat and neck, leaving the under surface of the jaw the only portion of this plane intact.

Before we define the planes of the head, we remind you again that the face divides into three equal parts — first, the forehead, second, the middle portion containing the eyes, nose and ears and third the lower portion of the mouth and chin.

While we use the egg shape as the first step in the *principle of construction* of the head, remember that heads actually have many shapes. There are long heads, square heads, round heads and many others.



Following the marginal drawings as we go, let us start to draw the front view of a man's head by first drawing in the egg-shaped form. Now let's place the hairline slightly above the top of the oval (this can vary according to individuals). We have, with the hairline, marked the upper boundary of the forehead. Now draw, from the top of the head, two slanting lines outward and downward to about halfway down the oval and ending on the outer edge of the oval. This will show the greatest width of the face. Now at about one-third the distance down from the top we draw a horizontal line to indicate the brow. Next, draw a line to mark the end of the nose, halfway between the brow and the chin – about one-third the distance below this point, we put the middle line of the mouth.

Our next step is to separate the front portion of the face from the sides. We do this by first drawing two lines for the vertical planes of the head, separating them from the side planes or temples at the sides of the forehead, then by continuing these same two lines outward and down to the cheekbones. From this point, they are brought down to a point on the outside of the chin, conforming to the curvature of the outline of the face. Another line drawn from the cheekbone to the top of the mouth adds another plane. The eyes are now placed on a line about halfway between the top of the head and the chin. They are also positioned by drawing oblique lines from the outer angles of the eye sockets to the end of the nose, and by two more lines from the top of the nose, out and down at an angle where they would meet the first two lines about halfway down the nose. These last four lines should form triangular enclosures over the eye sockets, enabling you to locate the inner and outer corners of the eye.

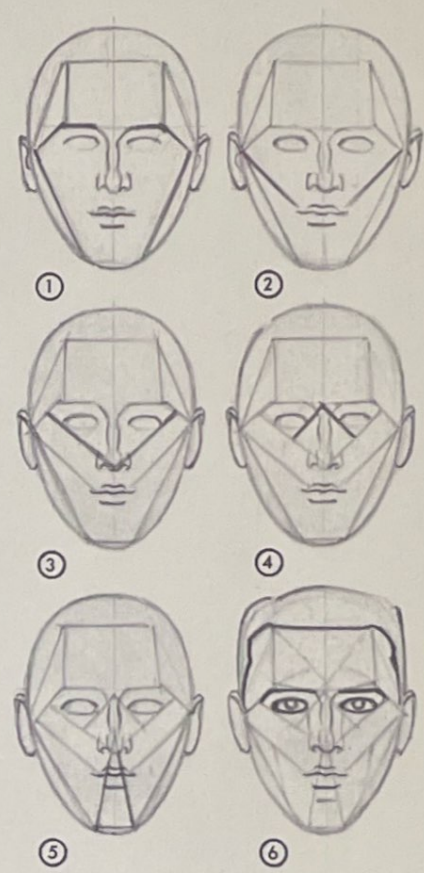
Next, draw two lines from a point about one-third the distance up the nose, outward and down to the outside points of the chin. They will pass along the groove of the upper lip and through the fullest portion of the lower lip. The most prominent plane of the forehead is found by drawing two lines from the top corners of the forehead, obliquely and down, almost to the top of the nose. Two minor triangles above the brows establish the planes above the eyes.

When making a drawing of a woman's head, you will proceed in the same manner, keeping in mind, however, that while the principle in plane construction is the same, the application should be done with softer and more feminine characteristics in the forms.

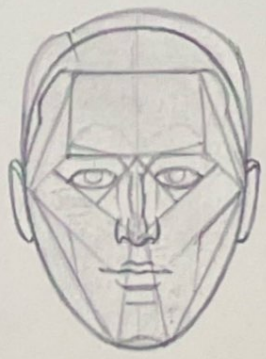
While drawing the head in planes does not give it its natural appearance, it does provide the foundation upon which the finished drawing can be developed. Remember that when you look at a normal face, you do not always see these planes – but they are there and it is the knowledge of them that helps you to find the basic construction as you draw.

Draw many heads in different positions and angles, paying special attention to establishing the planes. This is important study.

***Studying* and *memorizing* the principles of these successive stages of drawing the head is most important. *Applying* these principles must become second nature. After sufficient practice and study, you will automatically draw the head correctly without going through the actual steps shown. Remember that these principles apply to any type of person, character or age group.**

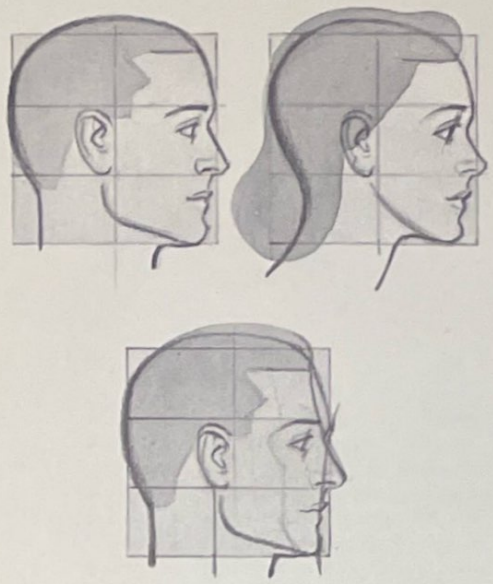


Study the weighted lines in these step by step drawings for the method of procedure.



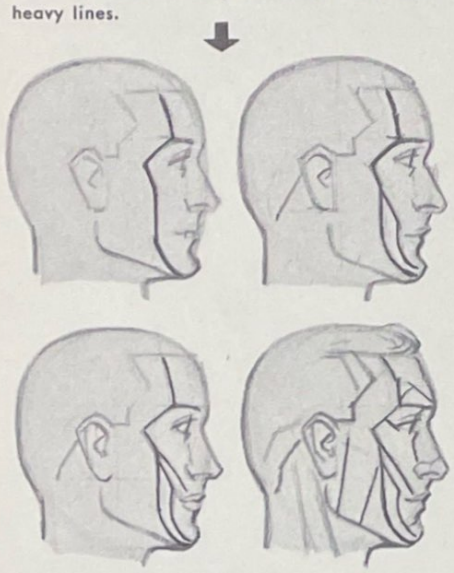
It is this knowledge . . .

that gives this final result.



Measurements are to be studied and *remembered* and are not to be physically applied every time you draw the head.

While the planes are always sketched in *very lightly* in constructing a head, we have, for the sake of demonstration, illustrated them with heavy lines.



The head in profile

To draw the head in profile, we first find its height and width which are about equal. Then, as in the front view, we mark the location of the hairline, the brow, the top of the nose and the chin. The head of the male is always indicated as more square than the female, whose head, going back from the hairline, slopes more and is rounded in back. We set the neck well back of the center of the head. The male neck rises almost vertically from the body and is shorter and thicker than the female's, whose neck is long and slender, leaving the body in a greater forward direction. These sexual differences in the neck and head should be drawn in when you begin to block in your drawing. *This is very important.*

The tip of the nose, the bottom of the ear and the base of the skull should be on a line, with the front of the ear just back of the center of the head. To establish the projection of the nose, draw a slightly concave line from the hairline to just in front of the nose tip marking.

An irregular reverse curve forms the outline of the profile from the top of the forehead to the chin and is very important as a guide in constructing the features and planes.

Two more noticeable sex differences are the angles of the jaw. In the female, the jaw should be curved, while in the male, it should be rather angular.

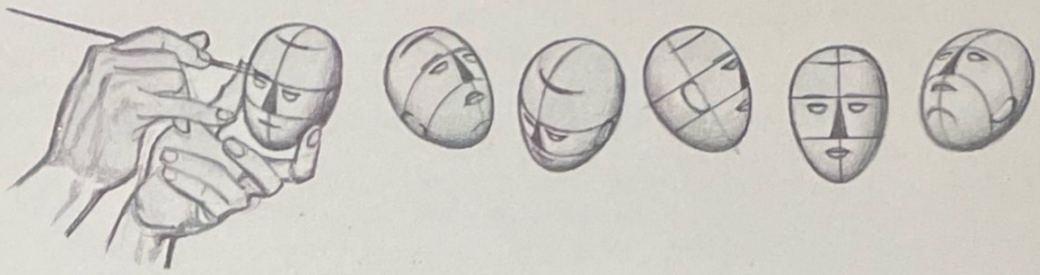
Now for the planes of the face in profile. The first step is to divide the front portions from the sides by locating the vertical plane of the forehead. The next step is to find the highest point of the cheekbone and the fullest part of the cheek and drawing a line down to the outside of the chin. As in the front view, the eye is placed just below the line of the brow, the mouth one-third the distance below the base of the nose to the chin. Note carefully the recess of the brow above the nose as well as those of the lips and chin. The front plane of the forehead reaches to a point near the top of the nose. The planes of the front of the face come from the cheekbone, one to the top of the mouth and the other to the outer side of the mouth and continuing to the chin. The largest plane on the outside of the face runs from the cheekbone downward and back to a point a little in front of the angle of the jaw. Within these basic planes we have shown you, are many ridges and depressions which are caused by the skull and muscles underneath the skin. A fine way to study this is to get someone to pose for you under many different lighting conditions. It is also good to try to have your models on the lean side as the construction of the face is then more apparent. Remember though, when drawing pretty girls, the planes are not as prominent as in men.

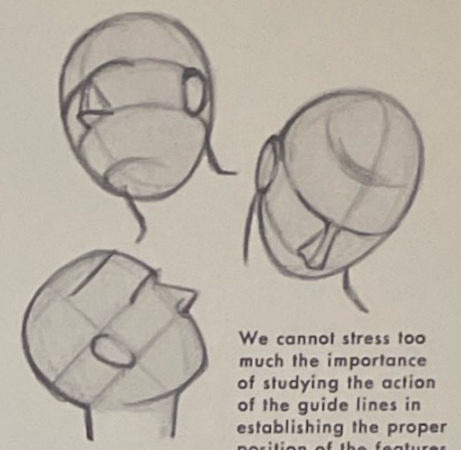
Always pose your model with the light coming from a single source if possible, with just enough light breaking up the shadow to see the construction of the subject.

Movement of the head

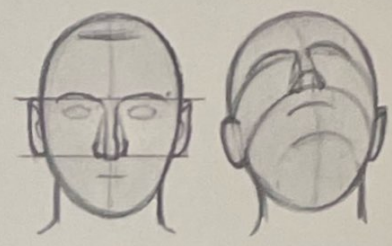
The head moves in two ways, forward and backward or from side to side in a rotary movement. It is limited in its side movements to a quarter circle in either direction. Consequently we can see the head in a different view with each movement. Therefore, it is very important when drawing the head in any action, to place the ears in proper relation to the rest of the face and to establish a definite line or point as a starting point. The head, in a normal upright position, shows the nose and ears on a level. A line connecting these points gives a good fixed basis for other measurements. These parts must keep the same relation to each other no matter what the position of the head. Any movement of the head backward or forward will make the end of the nose appear to be either above or below the ear. The guiding line, when drawn through these points, ceases to be a straight line but, according to the backward or forward movement of the head, will vary in its curve. The variation of curve in these guide lines and their relation to each other is a problem of perspective or foreshortening. Foreshortening in a head is usually slight unless looked at from a point quite close to the eye of the observer. As you move away from the subject, the foreshortening becomes more normal.

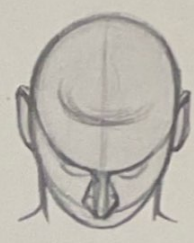
A common and often used method to study these effects is to draw the features and guide lines on the shell of a hard-boiled egg and use it as a model for a variety of views by turning it at different angles. This is an excellent method for studying how the different angles of the head affect the guide lines and the position of the various features.





We cannot stress too much the importance of studying the action of the guide lines in establishing the proper position of the features on the head — in action and perspective.





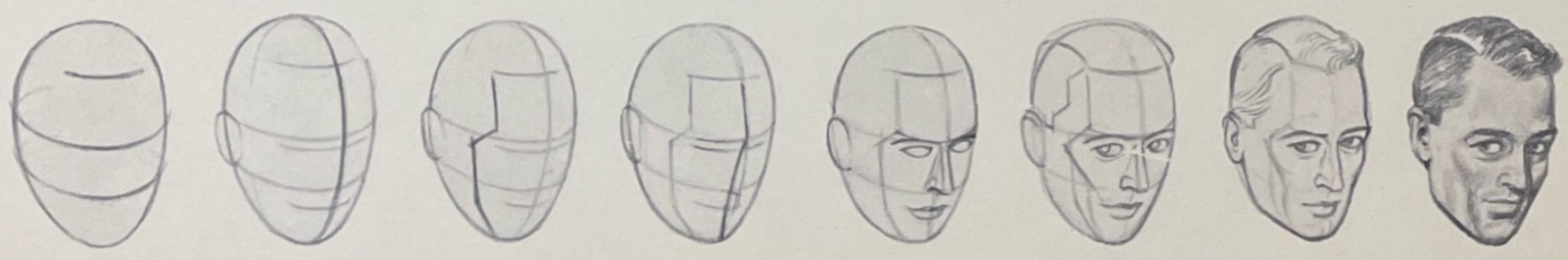
The head drawn at different angles

The three-quarter view of the head shows the nearest eye almost in full view — half the mouth almost in its true shape and form and the nose almost in profile.

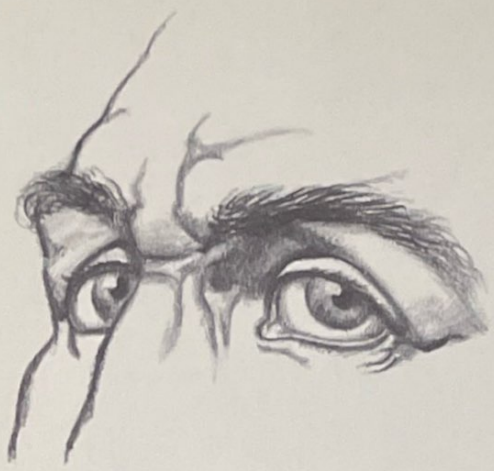
To draw this view, begin with the oval as in the egg exercises, very sketchily drawing the lines marking the hairline, the brow, the tip of the nose and the ears. Next, draw the vertical line around the form as shown, marking the degree of view in which the head is to be drawn. Our next step is to establish the vertical plane of the forehead and then the line down the cheek to divide the front of the face from the side. Now we locate, on the vertical line, the points of construction of the features. We then modify the line by advancing the line of the forehead forward to the brow, next slanting it down and backward to the mouth, and then vertically down to the end of the chin.

In constructing the brow, two lines are drawn sloping down and forward to the top of the nose. This forms the lower border of the front plane of the forehead. The arch of the brow is now suggested as shown. Now we project the nose from the central line, and position the eyes on each side. The mouth is then placed in correct relation to the rest of the features.

The outline of the cheek in a three quarter view is not an evenly curved line as though it were perfectly round, but rather with its fullness over the cheekbone and becoming concave as it passes down from the cheekbone to the eminence at the side of the mouth. Below this point it should turn out again to suggest the prominence of the chin. Remember that this outline must be balanced on the near side of the face and the two cheeks must appear evenly placed on each side of the middle line.



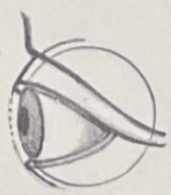
Study the weighted lines in these step by step drawings for the method of procedure.



The features

A thorough and separate knowledge of each feature of the face will be of little value without a clear understanding of the relation of all the parts to the whole. There are some parts of each feature that are externally significant and when you learn the basic construction of every feature as reduced to a simple drawing analysis, the business of drawing them together will be overcome. In studying the features, one should first become familiar with the inner structure of the various parts and in this way learn to understand its influence on the surface form. This structural knowledge, as we have said many times before, will enable you to draw the features with greater assurance and skill.

The eye



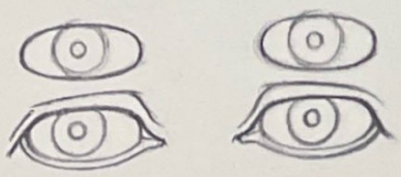
The eye socket is protected above by the frontal bone of the forehead bordered by the brows. The cheekbones beneath are re-enforced and the entire bony structure surrounding the eye is designed to protect this most expressive, and yet most delicate feature of the face. The upper lid moves over the curved eyeball. When open, the outer border follows the eye back, folding back as it does so. When closed, the upper lid of the eye is drawn smooth. The lower lid is nearly stationary and moves but little. The eye, cushioned in fat, rests in this socket. The eyeball is somewhat round in shape and its exposed portions consist of the pupil, the iris, cornea and the "white of the eye." Because the cornea or "transparent covering" fits over the eye much like a watch crystal fits over a watch, making part of a smaller sphere laid over a larger one, it causes the eye to be slightly projected in front.

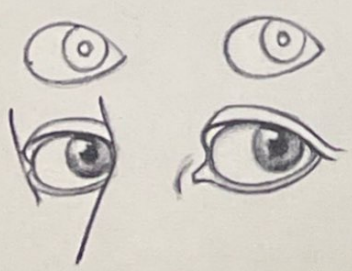
The lashes, which fringe the upper and lower lids from their outer margin, shade the eye, serving as delicate feelers to protect it. The upper lid instinctively closes when touched. The lower lid is stable but may be wrinkled and lifted slightly inward.

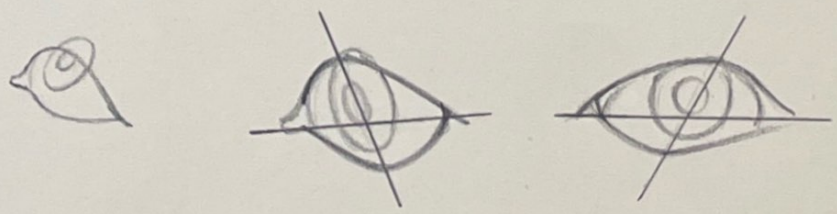
The eyes must be placed carefully within the borders that form the walls of the eye socket. These walls slope inward and down from the forehead to the cheekbone.

The difference between the inner and outer angles of the eye is very noticeable. At the outer angle, an upward turn of the lower lid is overhung by the fold and margin of the upper lid, while at the inner angle, the lids do not unite, but are separated by a narrow U-shaped recess floored with a pinkish membrane. From this point, when the eye is open, the upper lid rises abruptly and curves over the spherical form of the eyeball to its outer angle, continuing on to the cheek. The lower lid, thinner than the upper, starts with a slight downward curve to a point slightly beyond the center of the eye and then turns sharply upward, meeting the upper lid at a right angle.

The simplest form suggesting the opening between the eyelids is the oval. For the front view, it should be narrow with blunt ends. For the three-quarter view, a long egg-shaped oval is best. The shape of both eyes in three-quarter views is generally similar, the only difference being that the nearer eye is longer than the farther one. Note carefully the way in which the lines of the eyelids follow the fullness of the eyeball, and also the way in which they terminate beyond it. Note also that the lines of the upper lids are about the same. The exposed portion of the eye is always moist and therefore strongly reflects the light cast on it. This forms a highlight, the position of which is determined by the direction of the light. This is a very important detail and should always be defined.



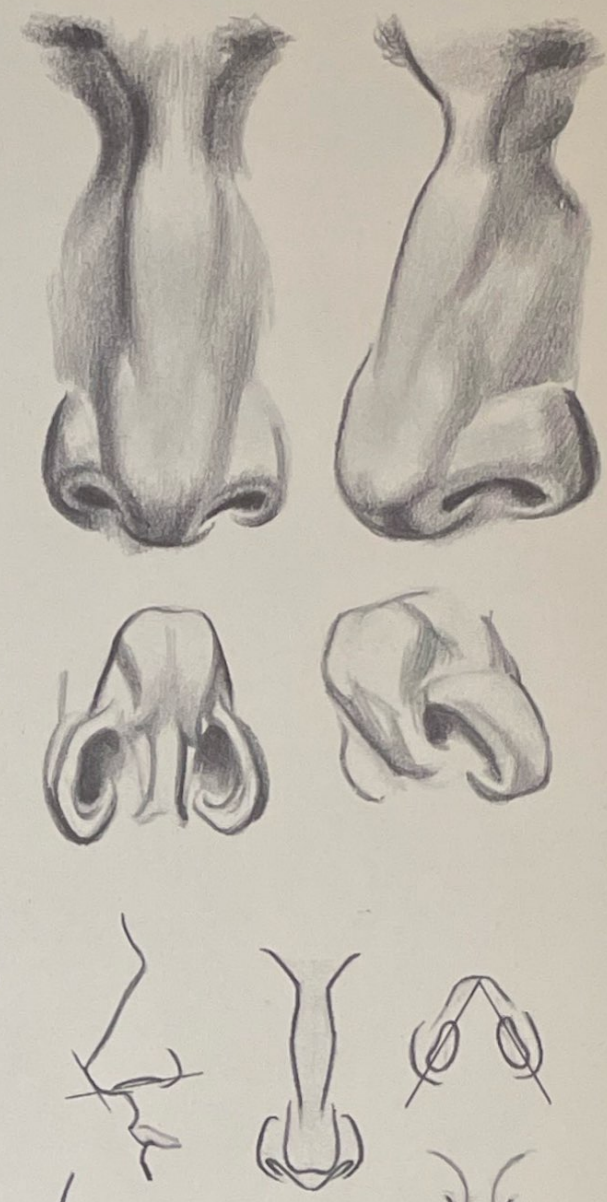




The nose

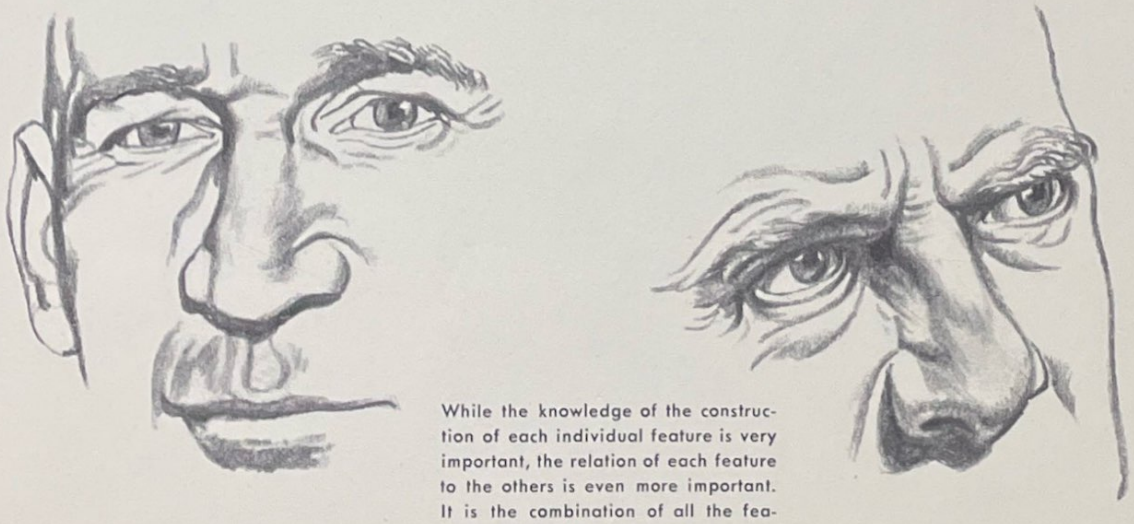
The nose is wedge shaped, narrow at its upper extremity and wider at its base. The upper part, reaching halfway down, consists of bone and is mortised into the forehead. The lower part is composed of five cartilages: two upper and two lower laterals and the septum which divides the nostrils. The nose is wider at its lower end than at its attachment above and is composed of two sides: the front, and an under surface. Each of these is divided into smaller planes. The surface of the front plane leaving the root of the nose is well rounded and widens as it forms the bridge where it is flattened. Narrowing as it descends, it again becomes rounder as it wedges between the bulbs forming the tip. The front surface continues downward and under, meeting the central cartilage and forming the narrow plane of the under surface of the nose. This plane separates the two nostrils, which in turn are enclosed by the wings. The wings form the lower sides of the nose and also form the triangular shape of its under surface which is readily seen when the head is thrown back. Both the wings and the end of the nose curl up into the nostrils.

On each side of the nose the planes begin at right angles to the planes of the face and, continuing down, bulge out just above the center even with the bridge. They then sink in and form large hollows extending down to the tops of the wings. The wings emerge from the sloping roof of the nostrils slightly back of the bulb and grow rounder and thicker as they recede, turning sharply as they attach to the face. The broadest parts of the wings are attached to the face slightly higher than where they curl up into the nostrils. The character of the nose depends entirely upon its differences in form and degree of projection of the bridge. We need not tell you how many different shapes and types of noses there are.



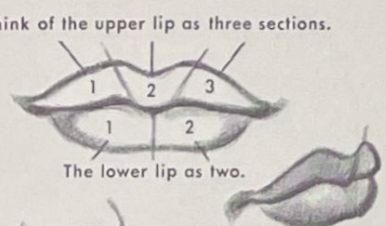
Most important points to remember in drawing the nose.

The variety in shapes of the nose is infinite and, more than any other single feature, it affects the appearance of the face.



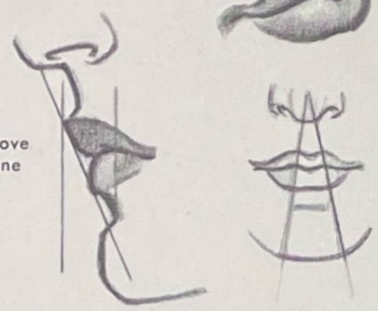
While the knowledge of the construction of each individual feature is very important, the relation of each feature to the others is even more important. It is the combination of all the features that establishes character.

The shape of the mouth and the lips depends on the teeth.

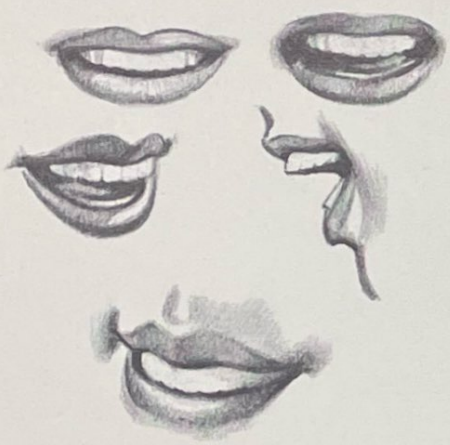


Think of the upper lip as three sections.

The lower lip as two.



The normal upper lip projects above the lower one except in specific characters.



The mouth

Like the eyes, the mouth is capable of great expression and movement and is the means of an infinite variety of expressions. Because of this mobility of expression in the mouth, care should be taken not to detach the parts one from the other, beyond accentuating their separation at the middle.

The shape of the mouth and lips depends on the shape of the teeth. The more curved the teeth, the more curved the mouth. The mouth, though convex in the mass and slightly raised from the general plane of the face, expresses its convexity differently in each lip. The mucous portion of the upper lip is divided into two equal parts and is of greatest width where the two parts come together in the middle of the mouth, diminishing in thickness as they retreat with a downward curve to the depressed corners.

The planes of the upper lip are comparatively flat and angular, while those of the lower lip are very convex and rounded.

Seen in profile, the thickness of the lips, their projection and their junction with the face becomes very apparent. We can then see how far the upper lip projects beyond the lower one, and how the lower lip overhangs the chin. In a well shaped mouth in profile, the lips are on a plane sloping backward to the furrow at the top of the chin, and the corner of the mouth will be seen to be slightly below the center of the lips. When smiling or laughing, both corners of the mouth are pulled back, which causes the lips to press against the teeth. The line of the upper lip then becomes horizontal while the general form of the lower lip appears concave.

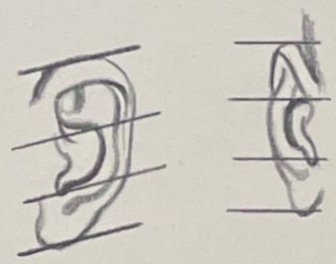
The curvature of the mouth with its depressed corners is best observed in the three-quarter view. No matter what the pose of the head, nothing is more important in the construction of the mouth than having its corners placed in true relation to its center. This assures correct drawing and symmetry. Both lips should always be considered in relation to each other and never drawn separately.

At the outer ends of the lips, a depression is caused by the convexity of the lips and the fleshy eminences around the corners of the mouth which also must be considered carefully in its modeling.

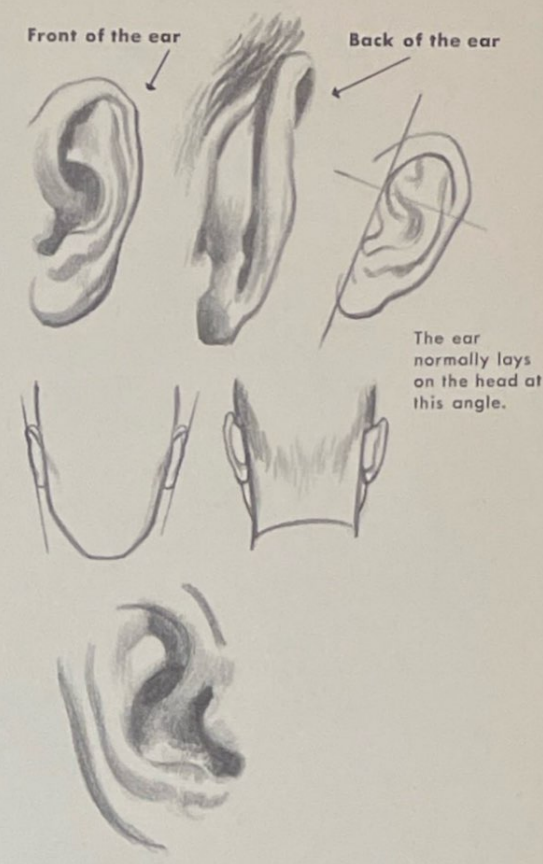
The ear

In drawing the ear, its exact position on the head is of the utmost importance. Its length is equal to that of the nose which it parallels on the head. At its widest part it is about half its own length and, if divided into three parts, the middle would be its orifice.

To understand the construction of the ear and to be able to appreciate its modeling, each part should be studied separately. The construction of the ear consists of a convoluted cartilage, having elevations and concavities requiring close study.



Think of the ear as being divided into three sections with the "bowl" in the center.



On the face side, the bowl or shell of the ear is protected by a small flap or raised form which shields the opening and is connected below to the cartilage that forms the immediate rim around the bowl. The lobe is the softest portion of the ear, while the cartilage that surrounds the bowl, by which it is attached to the head, is its most firm portion.

Seen from the front, the ears slant down and in and are parallel to the sloping planes of the sides of the head. The ear should be close to the head and not project away from it – except when specific characters are being drawn.

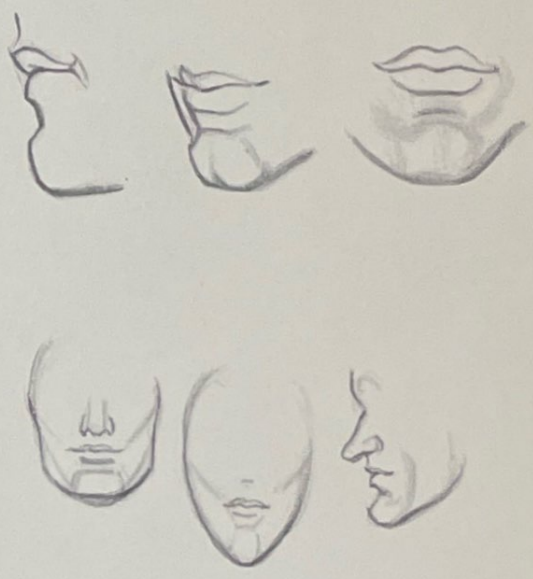
The whorls and wrinkles making up the ear, while varying greatly, have certain definite forms. There is an outer rim often ending with a tip; an inner elevation, in front of which is the hollow of the ear. The opening to the canal is protected from behind by small flaps and in front by a larger one.

The chin

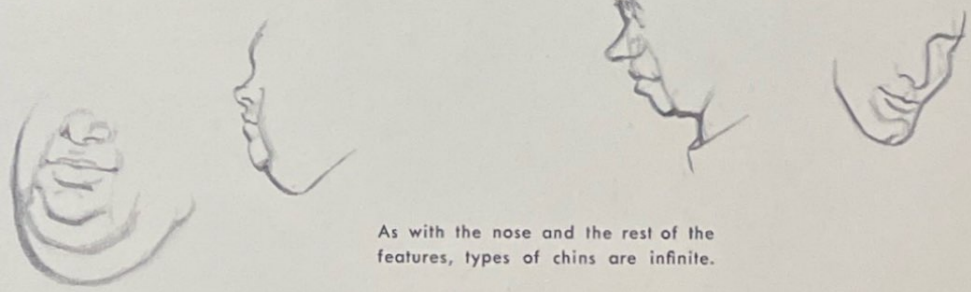
The greatest prominence of the chin lies just above its center. Its lower border is usually straight with a slight depression in the center. The form of the chin may vary greatly in each individual, in some cases being round or pointed, narrow or broad, flat and square and sometimes having a distinct dimple or furrow.

You, as the student, must be untiring in your search for minute details, making many studies of all the parts. Only in this way can you gain the detailed knowledge that becomes intimate and deep. It is by this knowledge that a foundation is laid which is solid and sure.

Again we wish to impress upon you that while a study of the head with its planes, forms and features provides the solid foundation on which your finished drawings can be developed and while *the knowledge of them is of immeasurable help in finding the basic construction of the human face while you draw,* the final answer to drawing people is *TO DRAW REAL PEOPLE.* Look around you – note all those people who help to make up your life – your family, your friends, even strangers who are a vital part of your life as an artist. Carry a sketch book with you constantly. Draw all the characters you see when riding the bus, when waiting anywhere. Observe every person you see—their eyes, the shape of their nose, their mouths, the special characteristics of their faces. All humans are different in appearance and have a great deal to teach you if you will only SEE, OBSERVE and DRAW them. People love to be sketched and will gladly sit for you. If you don't know them, make quick sketches of their basic differences in character. Your sketchbook can fit into your pocket and always be in your hands in an instant to record what you have seen. Every great artist has been helped in no small measure by his warm friend – *his sketchbook.*



You learn to draw — by drawing



As with the nose and the rest of the features, types of chins are infinite.

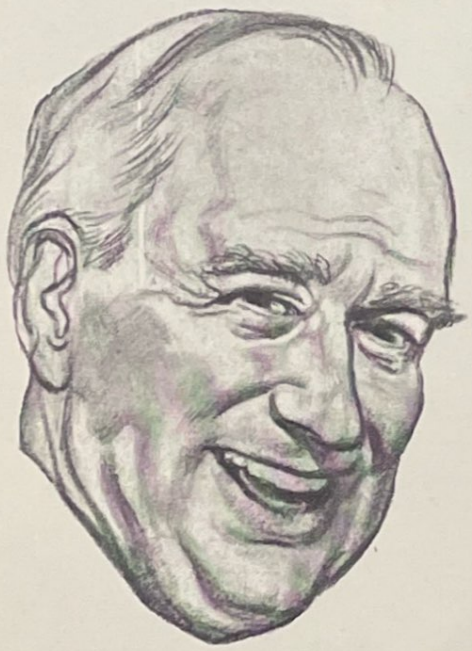
Facial character and expression

When drawing expression, the most important point to remember is that one part of the face *almost never* acts alone. There must always be a related action in conjunction with other facial muscles. You must also realize that when the mouth laughs, the eyes must wrinkle.

Try it yourself in front of a mirror. Try to laugh with your mouth without letting the action affect your eyes — see how false you look. Now relax and laugh naturally — see how every feature, muscle and plane in your face breaks into movement from the top of your head to your chin and back to your ears. Walk away from the mirror and do it over again — you can *actually feel* your whole face breaking into movement. Try every violent emotional expression you can think of — terror, anger, rage, sneering, helplessness, joy — everything moves. *Remember this always* when you draw expressions, and it will serve you well.

LAUGHTER . . . partly closes the eyes, elevates the corners of the open mouth as well as the outer parts of the brows and nostrils. Smiles have the same characteristics to a lesser degree.

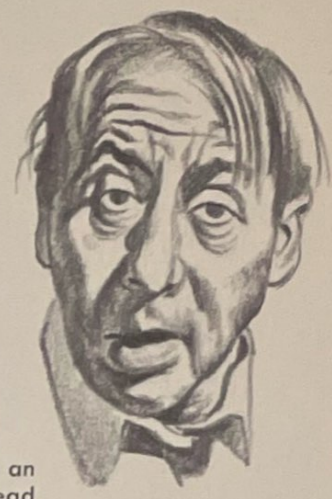
SNEERING AND DISDAIN . . . are indicated by an upturned and averted face with the eyelids partly closed, with a twist of the mouth to one side or down.



SHAME AND SHYNESS . . . have the same characteristics. A generally turned-down head, sometimes averted — also an averted look to the eye. In shyness the lips often pout.

FEAR . . . is expressed by dilated eyes and nostrils, open mouth and lowered head.

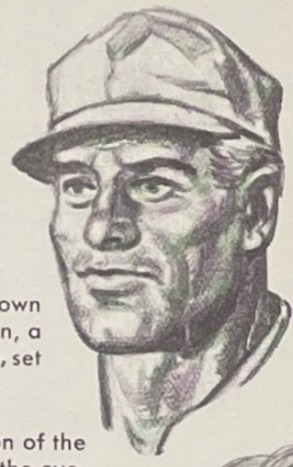
TERROR AND HORROR . . . produce dilated eyes and nostrils to a marked degree, an open mouth and lowered head — though it is sometimes thrown back.

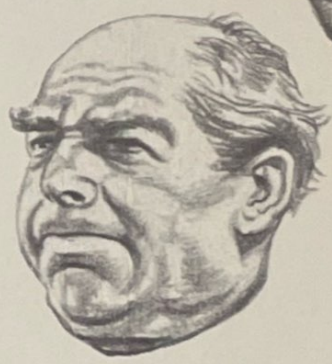


HELPLESSNESS . . . produces an open mouth, a wrinkled forehead and elevated eyebrows.

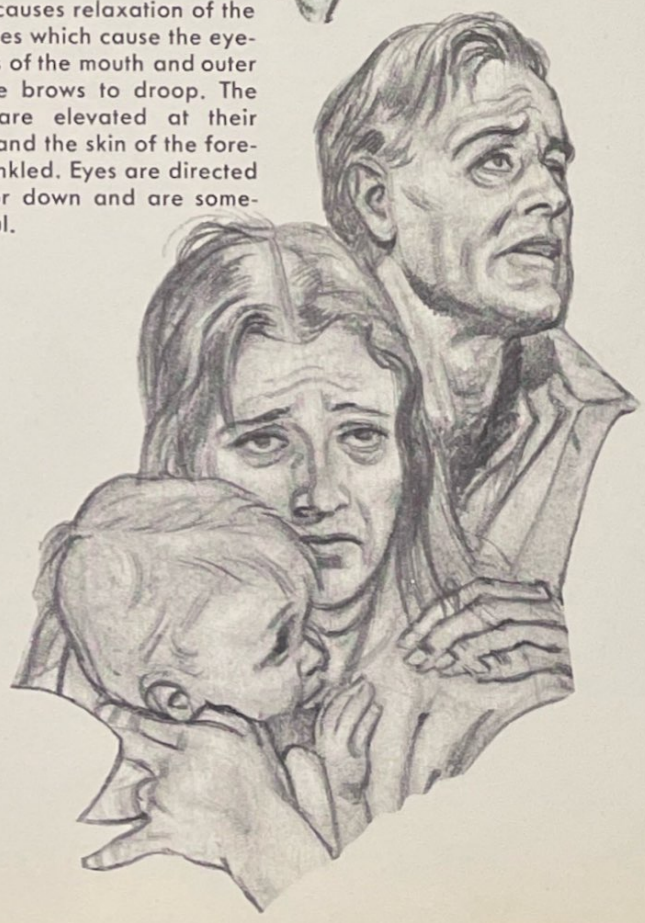
DETERMINATION . . . is shown by a strong, firm, protruding chin, a concentrated gaze and a firm, set mouth.

ANGER, RAGE AND INDIGNATION . . . are indicated by lowered brows, compressed lips, stiffly set jaws and glaring eyes. In rage, the lips are sometimes drawn back exposing the teeth.





GRIEF . . . causes relaxation of the facial muscles which cause the eyelids, corners of the mouth and outer parts of the brows to droop. The eyebrows are elevated at their inner ends and the skin of the forehead is wrinkled. Eyes are directed either up or down and are sometimes tearful.



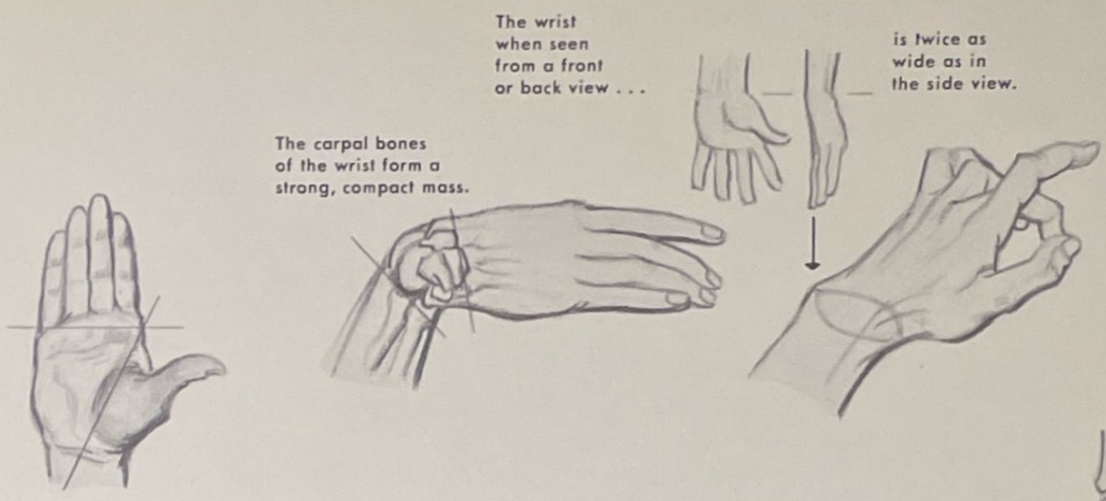
MEDITATION OR REFLECTION . . . generally cause a slight frown and the eyes usually assume a vacant expression.

The hand — its powers of expression

The hands, along with the face, should receive the careful attention of the artist. First, because aside from the face, they are the only generally exposed parts of the body. Second, and more important, because next to the face, they are the most expressive part of the human body. They are capable of showing an amazing range of actions and emotions. Third, due to the many parts such as fingers, palms, etc. and because of the many masses and planes, the hands are quite hard for the student to draw well without a great deal of study. It has often been said that the hand is the most difficult part of the figure to draw.

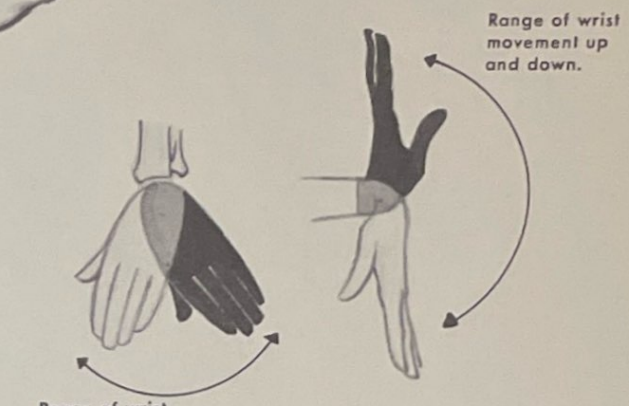
Drawing the hand

A common failing with many students when drawing hands in conjunction with the rest of the figure is a tendency to make them too small. Learn to give the study of hands their proper importance in your work and you will overcome this fault. Let us repeat again, next in importance to the face comes the hands. Make them large enough. Hold your hand flat against your face, the tips of your fingers to the end of your hand where it joins the wrist should reach almost from the top of your forehead to the point of your chin. Except when requirements of beauty, as in women, call for restraint in size, the hands must always be drawn with vigor and good size.


The wrist when seen from a front or back view . . .
is twice as wide as in the side view.
The carpal bones of the wrist form a strong, compact mass.

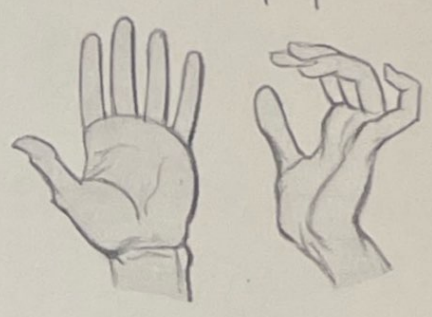
The hand itself is composed of two masses — that of the thumb part, and that of the hand proper.

The double rows of carpal bones of the wrist are mortised with those of the hand, making one mass. The hand always moves with the wrist. Twice as wide as it is thick, the wrist gets slightly smaller where it joins the arm. The wrist can also be called a universal joint for it is capable of a side-to-side and up-and-down as well as rotary movement. It enters into the large movements of the arm, giving it gracefulness and power. The action of the arm is transmitted to the hand by the wrist.

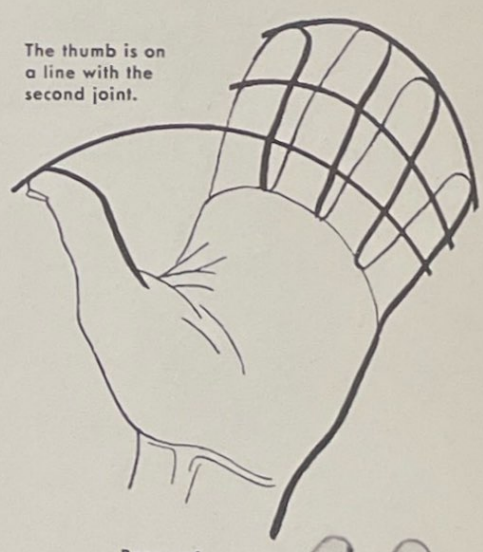


The center of the body of the hand is slightly below the body of the arm. Lay your arm and hand flat on a table, palm down, and notice that your wrist does not touch the table top. You will see that the mass of the wrist rises from the hand at a slight angle where it joins the arm.

The thumb side of the hand is larger than the side of the little finger. The hand is broader at the fingers than at the wrist; however, at the wrist it is deeper. Notice on your own hand that the palm is longer than the back of the hand.

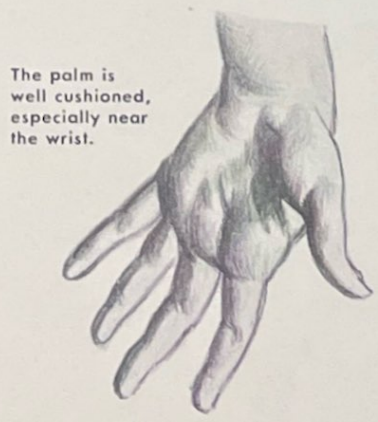


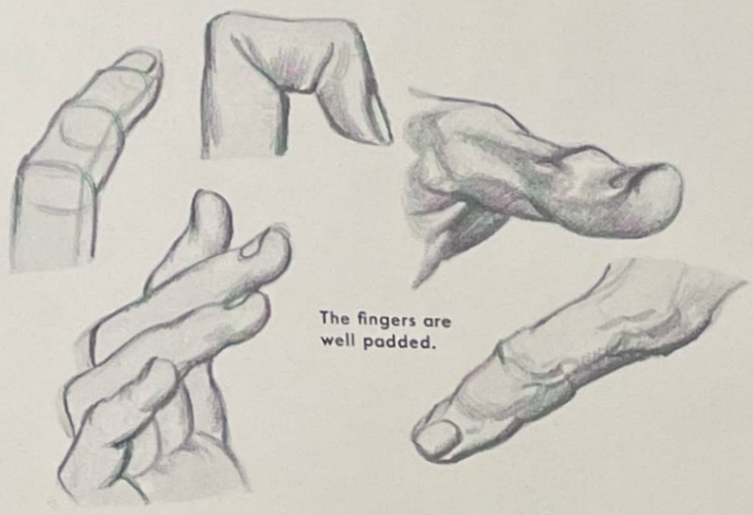
The palm gives the appearance of a shallow bowl with square sides, and it is well cushioned on both sides near the wrist. Except when the hand is clenched in a fist, the back of the hand is quite flat. A line across the wrist at a right angle marks the lower limit of the palm. The upper limit of the palm is also definitely marked by lines across the base of the fingers. Collectively they form a definite curve which rises highest at the base of the middle finger and then drops to cut the corner of the hand at the base of the little finger to join the curve running from this point to the wrist.

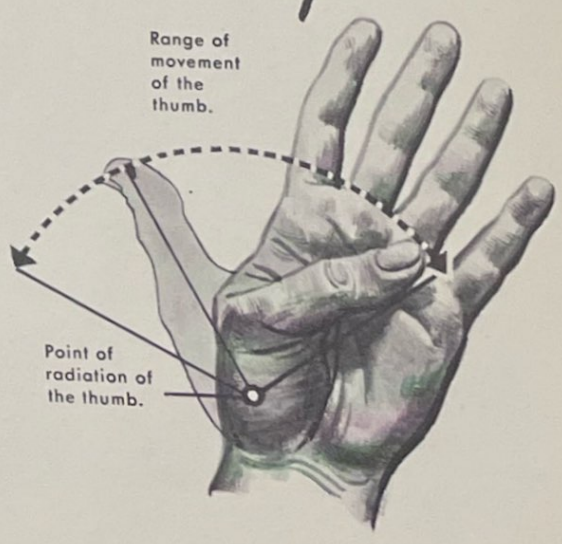


The thumb is set into the palm by an independent and a highly mobile "ball of the thumb," giving it a great range of movement, independent of the rest of the hand. With your hand held with its palm facing you directly, move your thumb in any direction. You can see it on almost every side.

In the palm of the hand most of the modeling is caused by a system of cushions and pads with which it is thickly upholstered. On the front of the thumb and fingers, as well as a considerable area of the palm, the substance built upon the bony foundation is literally padding.

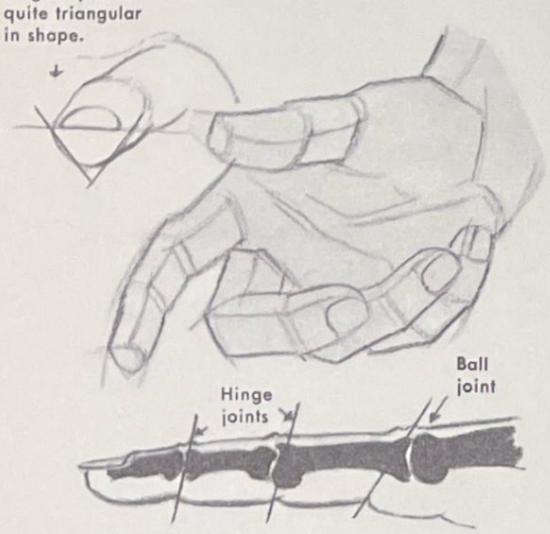




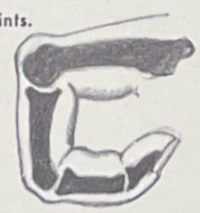


Portrait painting

Finger tips are quite triangular in shape.



Placement of skin folds relative to joints.



The fingers all taper, with the middle finger, being the longest, forming the apex of the mass. Each finger in itself tapers, with a tendency to converge towards the middle finger. In clenching the hand, notice that the fingers ends point to a common center.

Measured outside, the length of the thumb equals the length of the middle finger. It reaches to the middle joint of the first finger. The body of the thumb is heavier than the other fingers but, unlike them, only the last joint tapers.

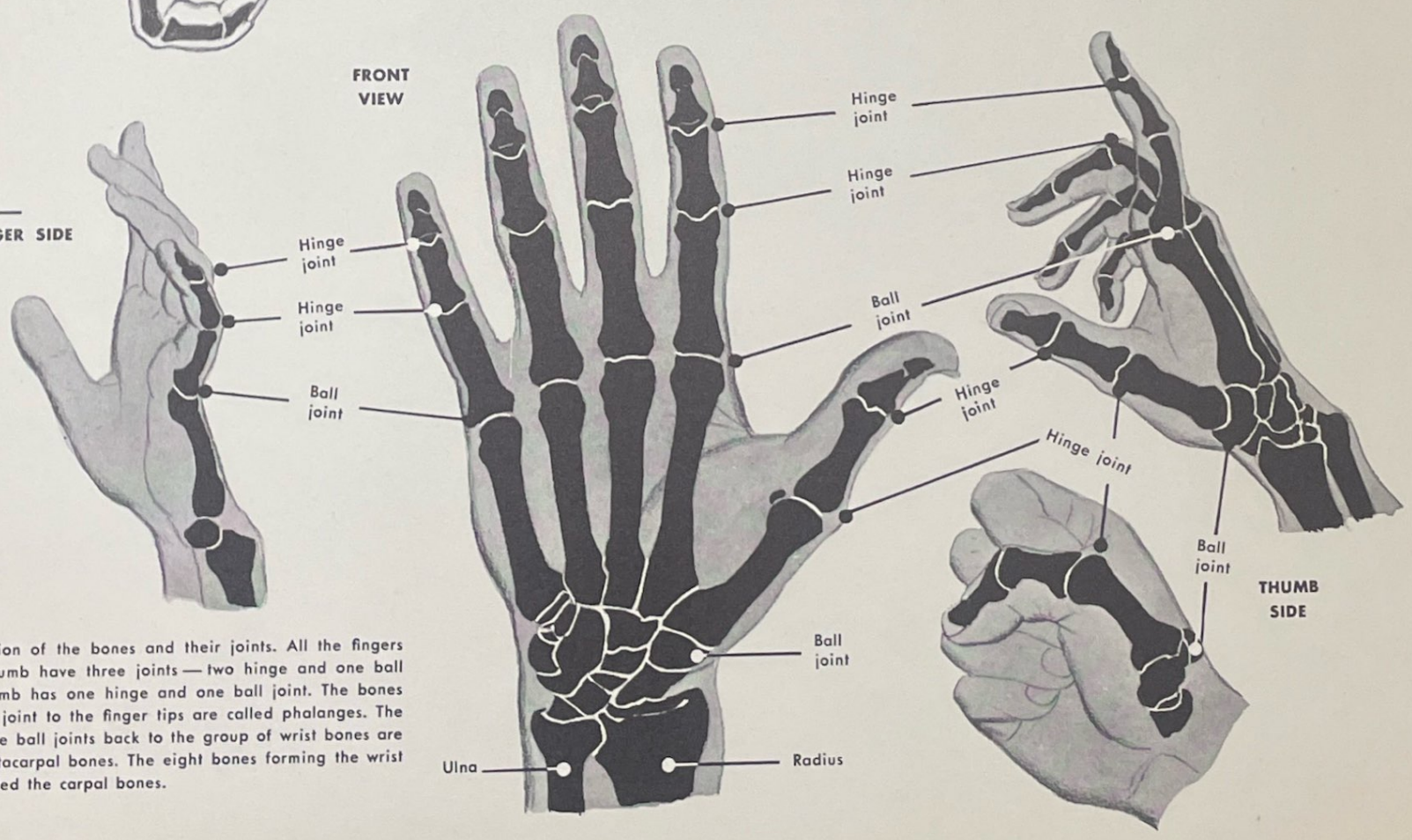
The sections of the fingers are more square than they would seem at first glance, with the last section containing the nail being quite triangular in shape, the nail with the flesh on either side forming its base.

To draw the hand correctly, you must have a knowledge of its internal structure – the bones that make up its framework and define its proportions. Therefore, we emphasize here the anatomy of the hand for you. You will do well to memorize the anatomy of the hand and fingers for if you know the bone construction of a hand, you will never have trouble in drawing it with character and expression.

It is important to know the joints – their degree of limitation and movement. The first joint of the thumb and the first two joints of the fingers are hinge joints – that is, they move in one direction only, at right angles to the length of the fingers as when folding them toward the palm. They have no movement in a side direction at all. Fully extended, the topmost joint of each finger is bent very slightly backwards. The lower joints of the fingers and the joint of the thumb will bend forward to an acute angle, while the upper joints or finger tips cannot bend even to a right angle.

You need never be at a loss for models of hands to study. Even when drawing, you have another hand to serve you in that capacity at any time and as faithfully as you choose. The addition of a mirror in front of you in which to reflect your free hand will give you an infinite variety of poses to choose from.

See – observe – remember



Study the action of the bones and their joints. All the fingers except the thumb have three joints — two hinge and one ball joint. The thumb has one hinge and one ball joint. The bones from the ball joint to the finger tips are called phalanges. The bones from the ball joints back to the group of wrist bones are called the metacarpal bones. The eight bones forming the wrist group are called the carpal bones.

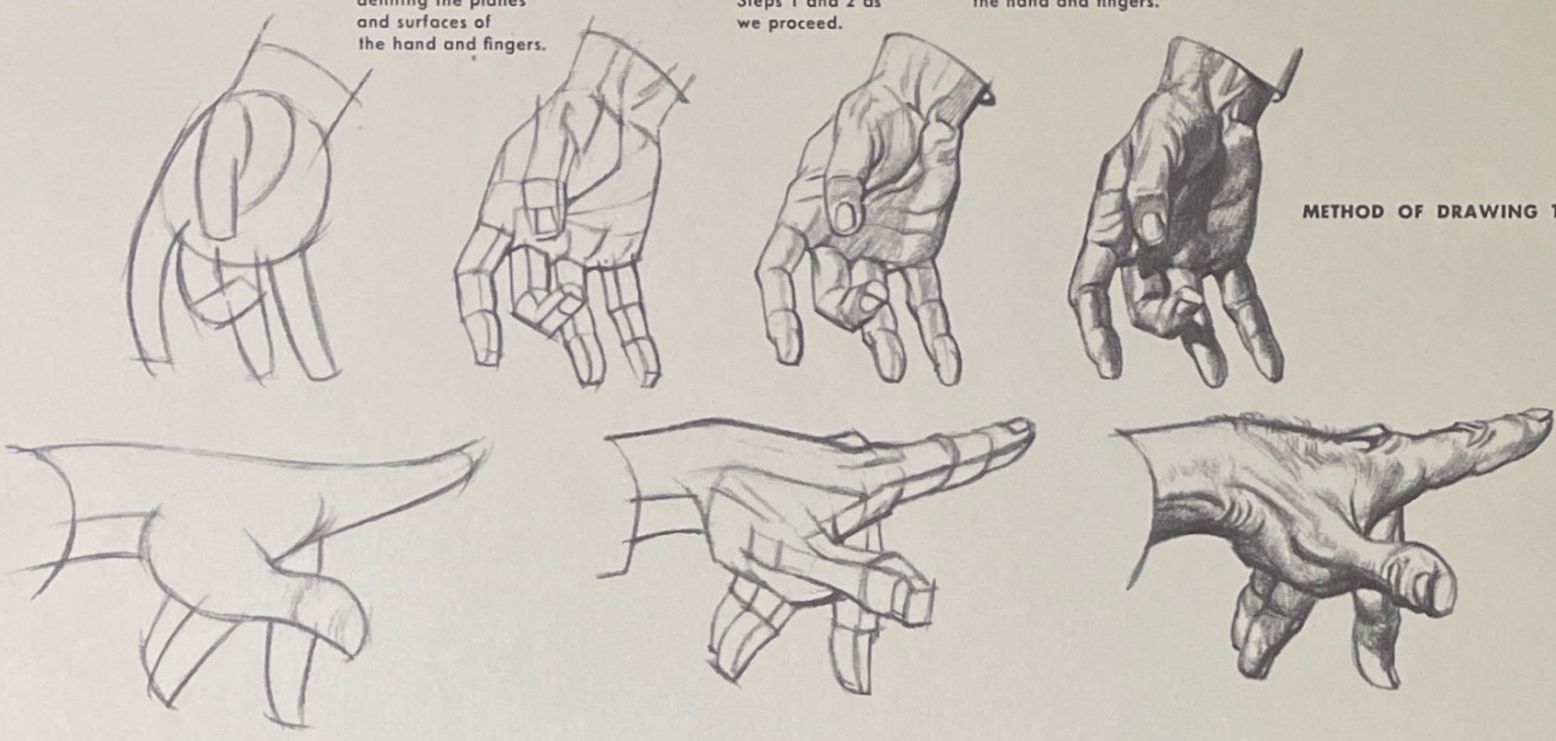
Portrait painting

Step 1 — Spacing and Placing
Sketch in the action and approximate area of the hand, fitting each part as it appears.

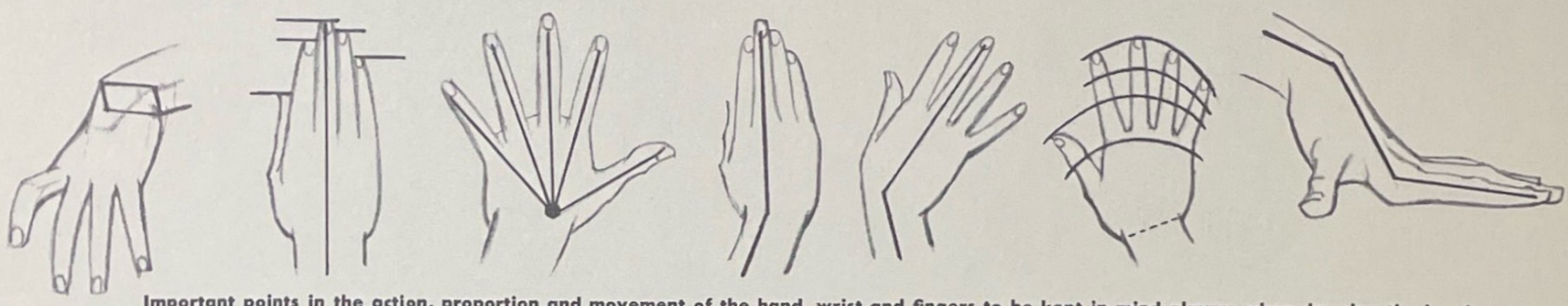
Step 2 — Solidity of Construction
The block method of drawing the hand is of great assistance in defining the planes and surfaces of the hand and fingers.

Step 3 — Details
We now carefully draw the details of the hand and the fingers, erasing Steps 1 and 2 as we proceed.

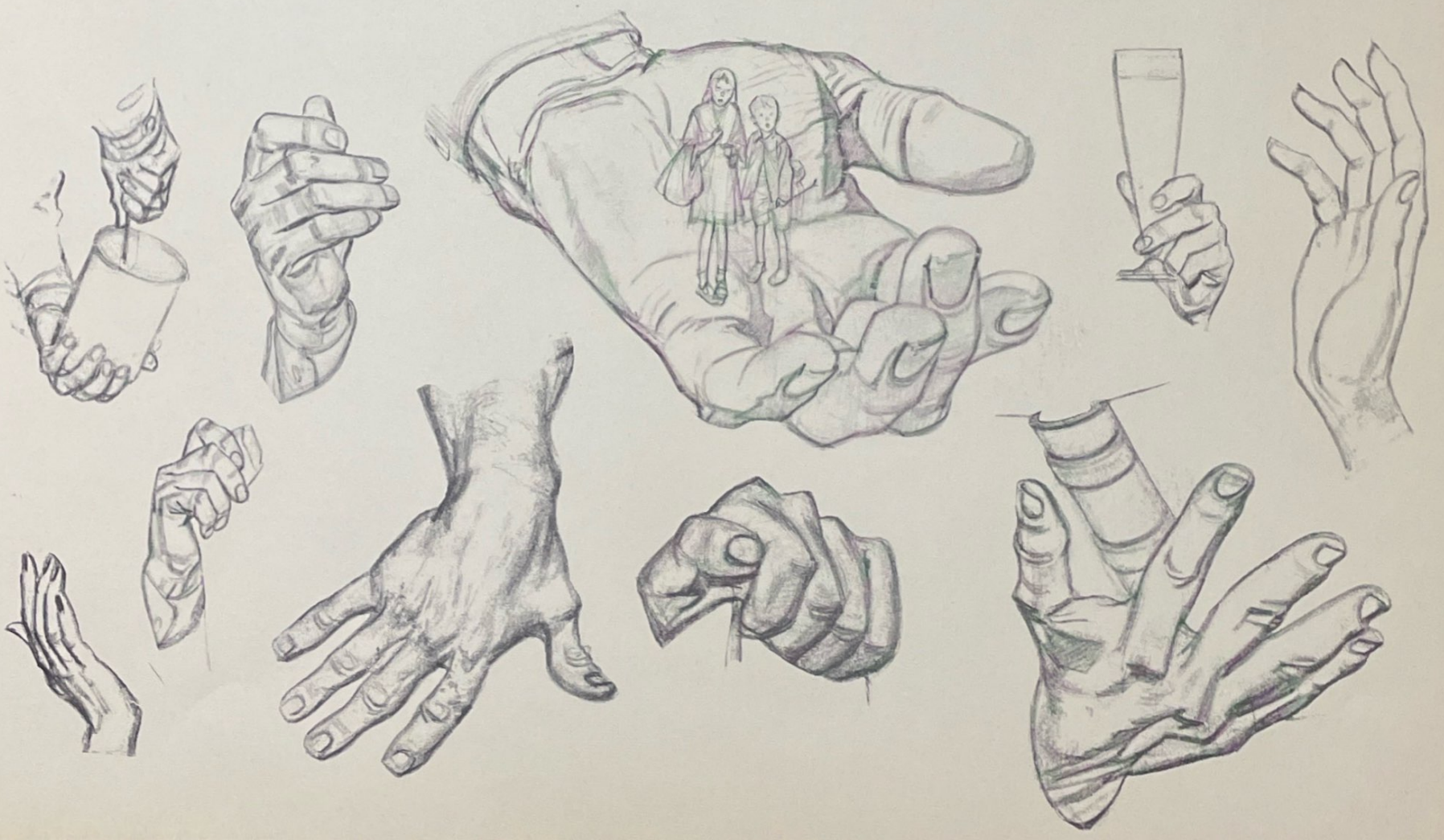
Step 4 — Planes of Light and Shade
Finally we put in light and shade, taking care not to spoil the forms of the hand and fingers.



METHOD OF DRAWING THE HAND

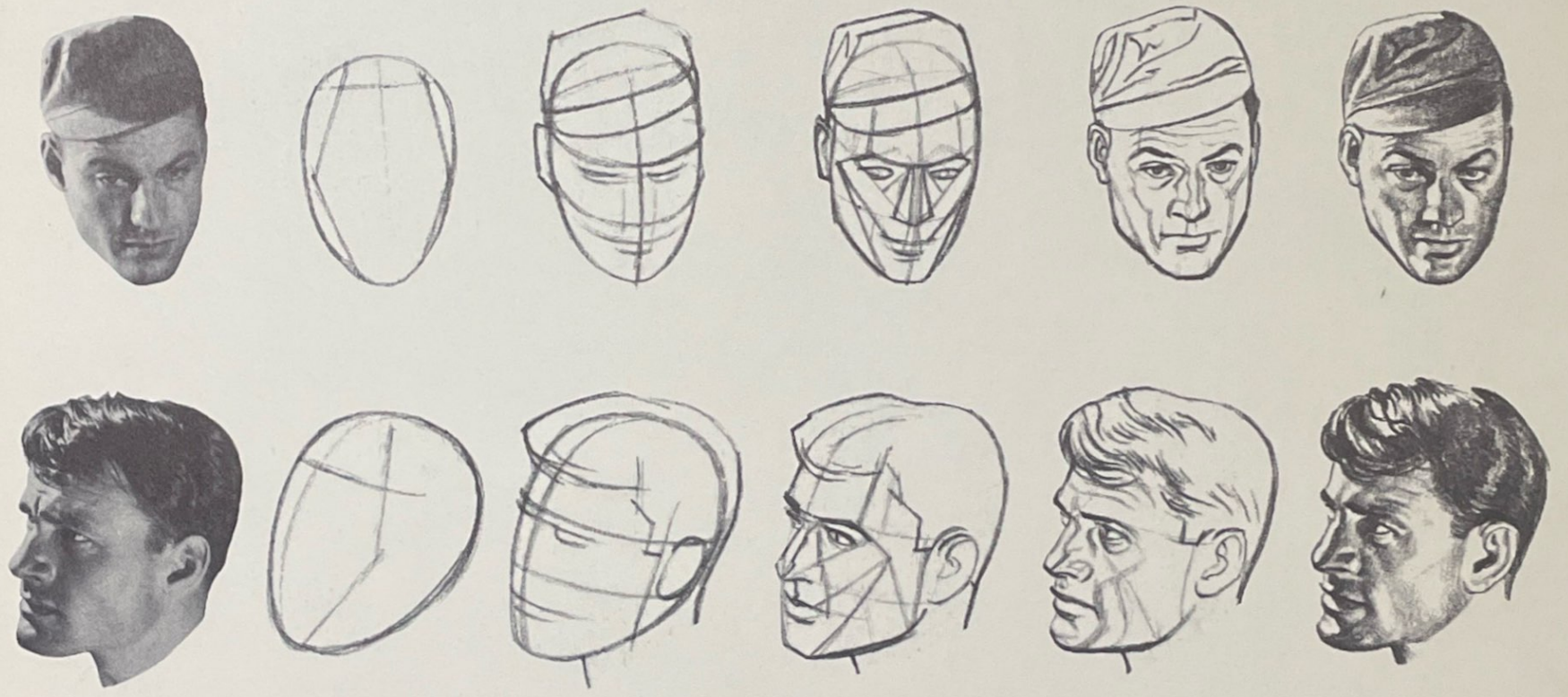


Important points in the action, proportion and movement of the hand, wrist and fingers to be kept in mind always when drawing the hand.



Portrait painting

Progressive steps in drawing the head



THE MODEL

STEP 1

Using the egg principle to start, establish the action and tilt of the head itself.

STEP 2

Now establish perspective and proportions, also generally positioning the features and the hair.

STEP 3

At this stage find the planes and erase the lines drawn in the first two steps.

STEP 4

Draw in the features carefully and in detail, including the directional lines of the hair. You are now ready to put in light and shade.

THE FINISHED DRAWING

The progressive stages on this page were done in pencil, including the shading of the finished drawings.

This page was designed to show the changes in the relative proportion of the head and features at different ages.

AT ONE YEAR the head is large in proportion to the face and features which seem enclosed by chubby, full cheeks. The eyes are placed lower on the head. The chin and nose are quite small and the neck is short and fatty. The eyebrows on an infant of this age are very light.

AT SIX YEARS the head seems smaller in proportion to the face which is growing larger with the chin becoming more pronounced. The mouth and the nose show a more definite shape at this age and the neck is growing longer.

AT ELEVEN YEARS a pronounced change has taken place. The head is definitely smaller in proportion, the face has lengthened with the jaw and chin becoming quite definite. The nose has grown longer and the eyes are placed higher. The mouth assumes a firmer quality. The neck grows longer and begins to develop.

AT SEVENTEEN we have almost an adult head with adult proportions. The eyes, lips, nose and chin having developed almost to their full size, now begin to show definite characteristics while the jaw and cheekbones assume much more prominence with the construction of the neck also becoming more pronounced.

EACH ACCORDING TO THE DICTATES OF HIS OWN CONSCIENCE

NORMAN ROCKWELL

By permission Saturday Evening Post © 1943 Curtis Pub. Co.

All the drawings on this page were done with a 1B or 2B pencil on tracing paper.

The studio, model, myself, and equipment.

Painting a portrait – by Stahl

This portrait of my daughter Regina is one of my favorites. Painting the people you know and love best is always most fun. I chose the props carefully to suggest the atmosphere of childhood.

Not long after a person takes up this most satisfying and yet tormenting hobby of painting, a natural desire develops to paint a portrait of a member of the family or a friend. I can assure you that this is not an easy thing to do. A sound knowledge of drawing is perhaps the first prerequisite, but not entirely necessary. I am of course assuming that the average hobbyist realizes it will probably be a long time before he or she turns out masterpieces. The main thing is to have fun — and you can. As you become more practiced and learn more about drawing, you will have that much more fun and satisfaction — and, I might add, that much more dissatisfaction.

Most amateurs try painting a portrait in oil too soon. I would suggest that they first learn to handle the oil medium. Start by doing many still-life paintings in oil, then turn to landscape. After you feel confident that you have mastered the medium to a certain extent, try painting the human figure or head.

At first don't attempt to get a likeness. Of course you should try to copy every value, shape, and color as accurately as you can, and if you manage to do this successfully a likeness will emerge automatically. But don't consciously *try* for the likeness. You will have enough trouble as it is. (The word "trouble" in painting does not have the evil connotations that it has in other things. "Trouble" in painting means "problem" or "puzzle"—in other words, "fun.") When you have developed some skill in painting the head you are ready to attempt a real likeness in oils.

Now if you promise me that you will not become discouraged, or give up and throw away your brushes, I will say forget all the foregoing good advice. Just get a canvas board or canvas, set out your colors on a good palette, talk some unsuspecting friend into posing, and begin painting. It doesn't actually matter much if you are not completely successful the first few — or many — times you try making a portrait. Even the most competent painter is not always able to get the effect he wants. You will enjoy yourself anyway, as will your friend (if he has a sense of humor) and that, after all, is why you are painting.

Portrait painting

Start by painting *just the head* on a canvas no larger than 16″ x 20″. Don't try for a perfect likeness at the very beginning. Try instead to get the big proportions and the general character of the sitter's head, and attempt to place the features accurately. As you paint along you can correct detail and even some of the earlier larger proportions.

Before you touch brush to canvas, make several pencil or charcoal sketches in order to become more familiar with the general features of the sitter. You may find, too, that one of these sketches is just the thing you are looking for when it comes to deciding how the head shall be placed on the canvas. These drawings do not have to be finished affairs. Some may take five minutes or so. But I do wish to impress upon you the fact that preliminary work is most important. You will get out of this only what you put into it.

Now let's talk about some of the phases of portraiture that go beyond the mere capturing of a likeness.These are some of the things you might look for while you paint, and this knowledge may help make your next portrait a little better than the last — not necessarily in technique, but in creativeness, in idea or inspiration.

Every great portrait is 50 per cent a portrait of the artist who created it. Even an amateur who is just painting a portrait for fun is bound to inject, unwittingly perhaps, a great deal of his own personality into his work. You will find that although you are painting the likeness of another, that likeness will be stamped with your own personality. This will come through in your use of imagination, your manner of painting, and the way you feel about the subject.

Rembrandt's great ability as an artist made all of his sitters one family — his family. His emotional drive charges through all his paintings like a wild stallion. His portraits are important because of their quality as pictures, rather than because they present a likeness of someone. He painted people not as they saw themselves, and not as others saw them, but as *he* saw them or wished to see them. He did not hesitate to make heroes even out of beggars. Yet at the same time he brought out the character of his subjects so powerfully that we know positively we are looking at people who moved and breathed and lived a life strong and vital.

Imagination

In the group of portraits by Rembrandt, Cuyp, and Maes we can see very easily what imagination can do, and how the artist's personality shows through. The Cuyp and Maes portraits are uninspired as compared with the Rembrandt pair. Rembrandt dressed his sitters to suit himself. He wanted first of all a fine picture, as well as a good portrait. These two people are definite types, cast as Rembrandt chose to cast them. He got the effect he wanted in both cases partly by his use of costume. In the portrait of Mrs. Tripp, it meant adding just a bit of handkerchief. (The good Mrs. Tripp would not stand for any nonsense, even from the great Rembrandt, and so no fancy costumes for her, thank you.) Just a handkerchief — but what a difference it makes!

So I say, pull out the props. Paint your people in interesting settings, in fascinating clothes. Then if the painting turns out to be a poor likeness you still have a charming picture.

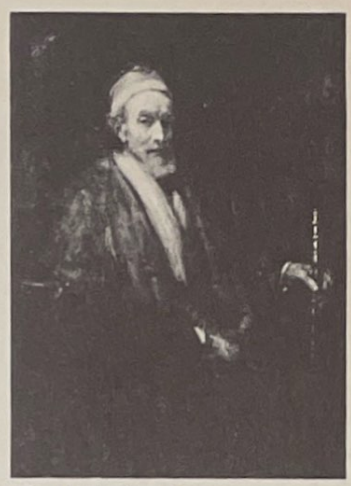
Caricature in portrait painting

Exaggerate! Just a little, accent the decidedly personal features of the sitter. If the girl you are painting has large blue eyes, make them a wee bit larger and a wee bit bluer.

These methods, carried further, will result ultimately in pure caricature; and that perhaps is what you don't want. So be careful. There is something cartoony and humorous about most people's physiognomy. Observe these characteristics carefully, but don't overdo them. Keep a wee bit this side of humor.

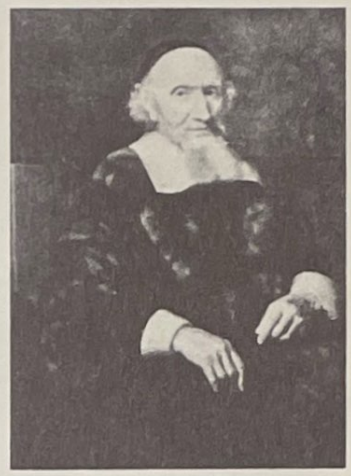
Things to do and things to avoid

I don't know why it is, but it seems that first attempts at an oil portrait are always composed in this manner — stiff, rigid, with eyes staring straight ahead. The left side of the face an exact duplicate of the right. If the subject is a man, the tie forming a dark line right down the middle. The background either a horrid raw green or red. The color of the face made up of various shades of white mixed with



REMBRANDT. Jacob Trip
National Gallery, London

REMBRANDT. Margaretha de Geer
National Gallery, London



NICOLAES MAES. Jacob Trip
Budapest Museum

NICOLAES MAES. Margaretha de Geer
Budapest Museum

AELBERT CUYP. Jacob Trip
Dr. Lutjens, Amsterdam

JACOB G. CUYP. Margaretha de Geer
Private collection

Portrait painting

I have cut the face in half, and reversed the negative to reproduce *two right sides.*

Here is how he would look if the *two left sides* of his face were mirrored. Each side of the face is quite different in proportions and detail. You must observe these differences carefully if you hope to capture a likeness.

The model in reality.

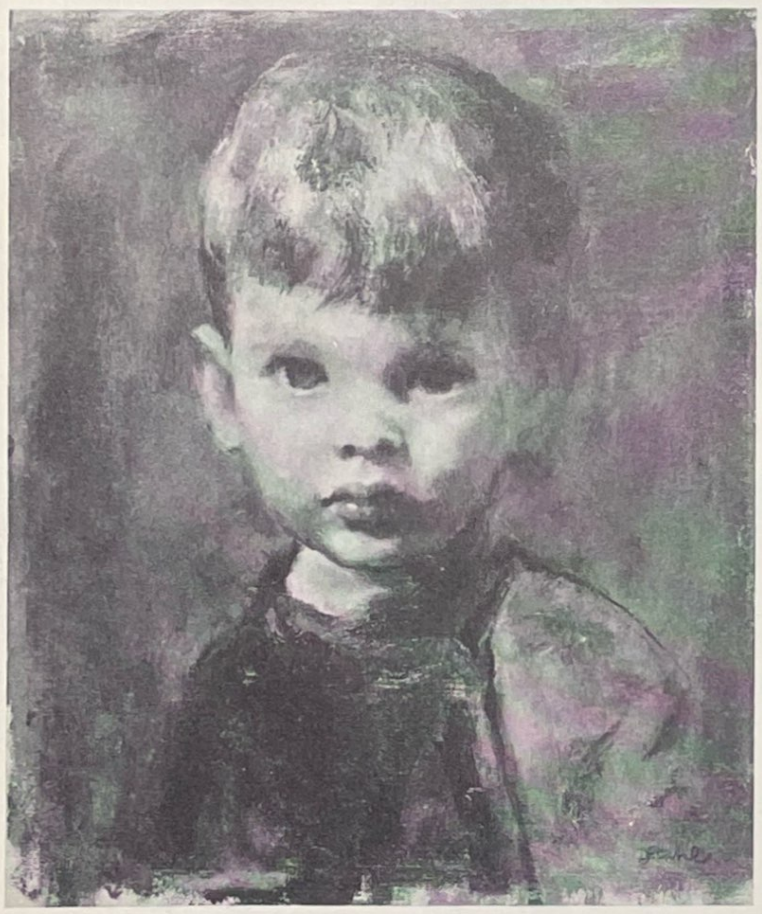
pure red and flecked with burnt sienna. These errors, now that you know them, you will not commit.

The left side of the human face is *entirely* different from the right, as the photos prove. Nature never repeats itself in exactly the same way when creating plastic forms – not even in a human face. Your left eye (no matter how perfect your features may be) is not exactly like your right eye, and so on. Furthermore, the positioning of your eyes and other features is not symmetrical. One eye is either higher or lower than the other, one nostril slightly different in shape and position on the nose. The nose itself is bent more or less either to right or left. These slight differences do not make us a race of freaks, by any means. They do make us a race of characters and individuals – extremely paintable subject matter.

Don't give equal importance to all the features. Think of the features as actors in a play. Let one or two of the features which are most characteristic of your sitter be the stars of your show. For example, the sitter may have eyes which are extremely striking. Play up the eyes, then, by exaggerating them or by carrying them further into detail.

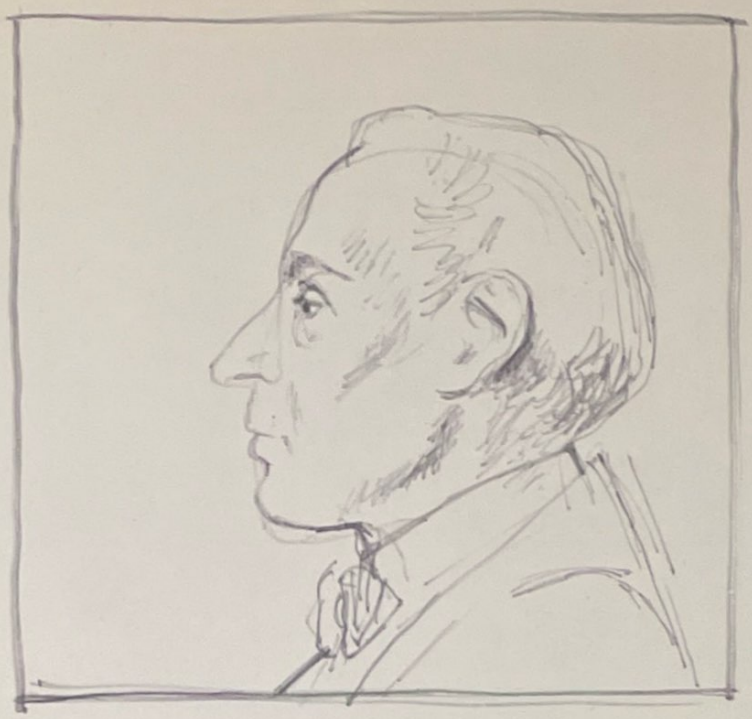
Allow your sitter to take a natural pose. If he or she has a habit of cocking the head to one side, paint it that way. See to it that the model is comfortable. You'll get a lot less squirming and the pose will be more characteristic of the sitter. Pose your model in a setting that is in harmony with either the occupation or the mood of the sitter. I would advise, at least in the beginning, simple backgrounds, grayed in color. Paint your background thinly; that is, with very little paint and much medium. Then it will be easy to make changes as they become advisable.

I personally do not make a careful drawing on my canvas before I start to paint. I prefer to consider painting and drawing as one operation. This you may try as you wish, but for the beginner I do not think it too wise. It is better to draw a careful representation of your subject with either charcoal or brush on the canvas first, and then begin to paint. This is true especially in the case of portraiture.

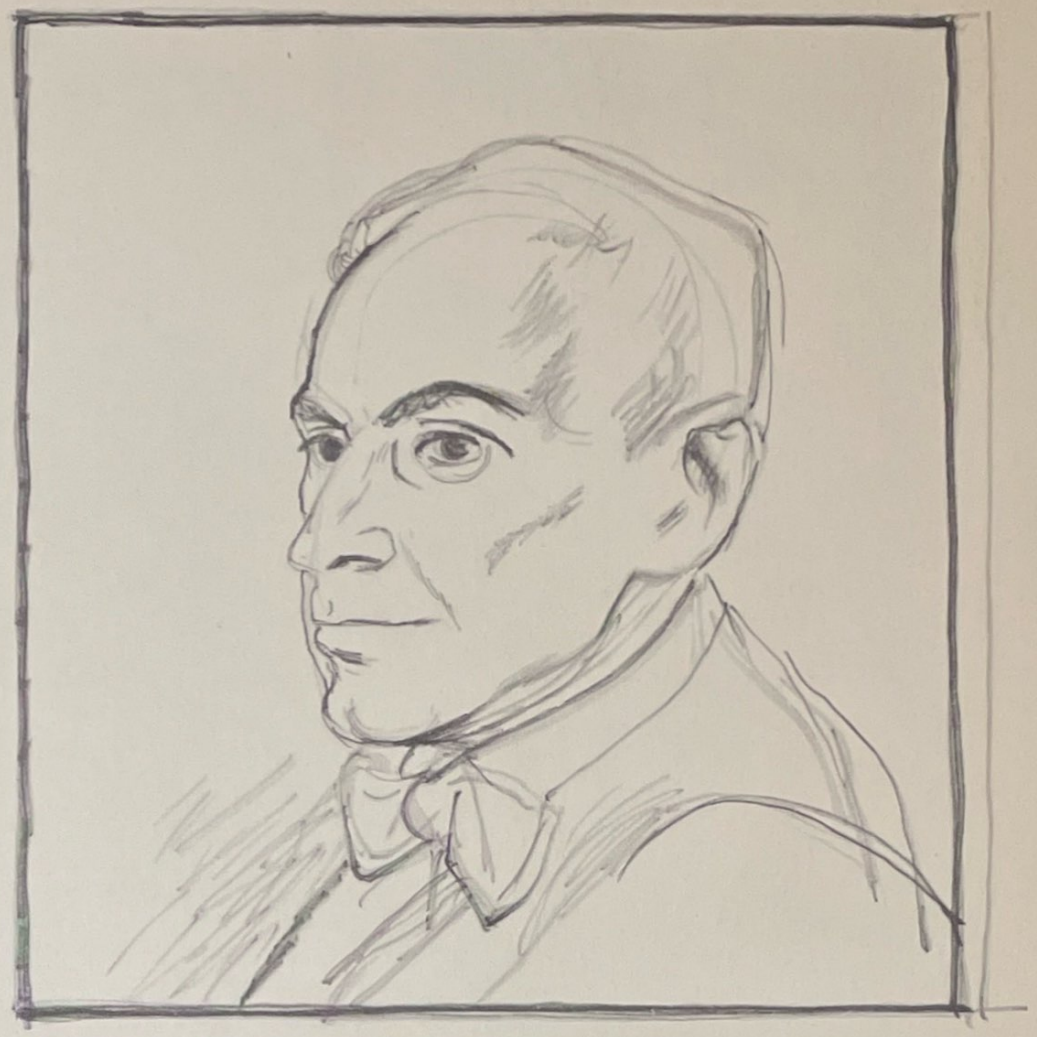


Portrait sketch of my little son, Davey. The painting is not really "finished" in the sense that I have loaded it down in any area with precise detail; but when I reached this point I knew that nothing further was needed to capture his personality.

In this fairly early portrait of my Grandmother I tried to capture both likeness and personality. As you can see, the detail is reserved entirely for the face. It is much easier to paint older people than young boys or teen-age girls, because the years have brought out character in the face clearly.



Like the direct front pose, the profile is likely to be monotonous and uninteresting. It would be much better to paint a three-quarter view.



The three-quarter front view has been popular for centuries, and I believe it is best, generally speaking.

Placing the head on canvas

Think of the background as a shape unto itself. Try to make it as interesting as you can.

Allow more space in front of the face than in back of the head, lest this occur.

Portrait painting

Rough sketch for a portrait. The light areas of the head make an interesting pattern against the dark.

Break your picture area up into thirds, approximately, and place important subject matter where the lines cross. It's a pretty safe rule-of-thumb method for early experiments in arrangement.

Bad arrangements of head and figure in the space

a) Head too high and too far to side
b) Face too close to left
c) Head too low in frame
d) Head too high in frame
e) Head fills up too much of picture
f) Profile too near picture edge

In the sketches above, the figure has been set within the picture area in various ways which would be difficult to handle successfully. A competent, experienced painter can use unorthodox methods of arrangement like some of those shown, and get away with it — but only because he is ingenious enough to make compensating adjustments in tone or composition. From a practical point of view, I would advise the beginner not to break too much with tradition.

Hands

Most people have trouble drawing hands – and that includes the most accomplished of professional artists. So it is natural that someone just taking up painting will run into trouble. A most important thing to keep in mind when drawing a hand is to decide what the hand is *doing*. Draw that – capture the *gesture*—then even if the hand is not too well drawn it will still look convincing. A hand can be drawn perfectly, but if there is no feeling of gesture it will be static and expressionless.

Don't fuss with the hands too much. Very often they may be left roughed-in, unfinished, and the painting will benefit because more attention will then be directed to the head. So much has been written elsewhere in the course on the actual drawing of hands that I pass over this particular phase of portrait painting. Remember, however, that hands can describe the precise character of a person just as well, or even better, than the head itself.

Things to do

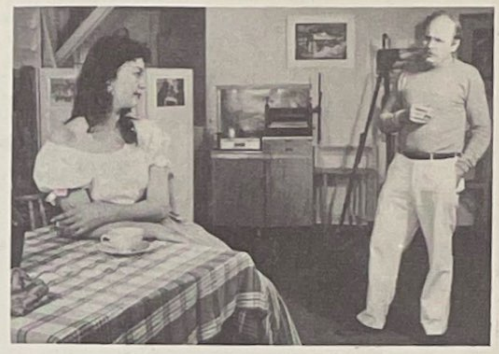
1. Allow your sitter to assume a comfortable, natural pose.
2. Plan positioning of the head carefully. (Create an interesting composition.)
3. Make a number of "portrait" sketches in pencil or charcoal *before* you start to paint. (This will familiarize you with the subject's features, and a better likeness in oil will result.)
4. A small thumbnail sketch in color will also help. (Not for likeness, but for arrangement and color planning.)
5. Try doing portraits of older people first. Their faces have more pronounced character, and it is therefore easier to grasp outstanding qualities of feature. This will make it easier for you to get a good likeness. Younger people are much more difficult, especially pretty girls. I don't want you to become discouraged at your first attempt, thus this suggestion.
6. Use larger brushes when you begin painting, smaller ones later. Remember — first things first. Establish the large areas and forms, and the main gestures, first of all. Work out detail later.
7. Here's a little rhyme to remember on the use of color: "A little bit of blue in everything you do."
8. Combine a bit of still life or some sort of "prop" with your portrait subject. This will add to the fun, and if the likeness doesn't "come off" you still won't be too discouraged.
9. Study great portraits.
10. Find a "god" among the great painters. Worship and imitate him. This is how very young children learn, and it works for people just starting to paint. It works equally well for people who have been students for some time. If you have character yourself, it will come through later and most of your influences will be lost. Renoir had his Delacroix; Delacroix had his Rubens. Beethoven owed much to Haydn and Mozart, and in his early work these influences are highly apparent.

There will be no list of "Don'ts." Very often a hobbyist does everything in a manner that is obviously "wrong" – and yet through a certain naivete and charm he comes up with a really fine picture. I do not wish to destroy certain wonderful conceptions by replacing them with static, unemotional, technical achievements. Paint as you will! Study, practice – and have fun.

1 My model brought along quite an assortment of everyday clothes, ranging from sports clothes to evening gowns. At this point I don't know what the final choice will be, but I am considering which costume will make for the best picture from a compositional viewpoint.

2 I move a mass of her hair forward. I feel that if the hair falls on both sides of the head in the same way it might be monotonous.

3 It might look better from here . . .



4 "Please turn your head this way, Sarah." Hmm . . . that's not so good either.

Posing the model

5 Or from here? Perhaps a profile?

6 This is the best angle, I guess, but that arm and left hand don't look too good. The pose seems to be clumsy.

7 This is fine, but her right arm looks too short. The hand holding the cigarette isn't good.

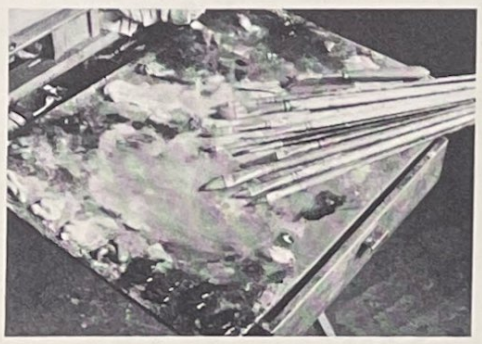
8 This is it! The jug works in well, and the addition of the teacup is a nice touch.

9 In arranging the drape, toss it over . . . Don't try to "arrange" too much — accident will do a better job.

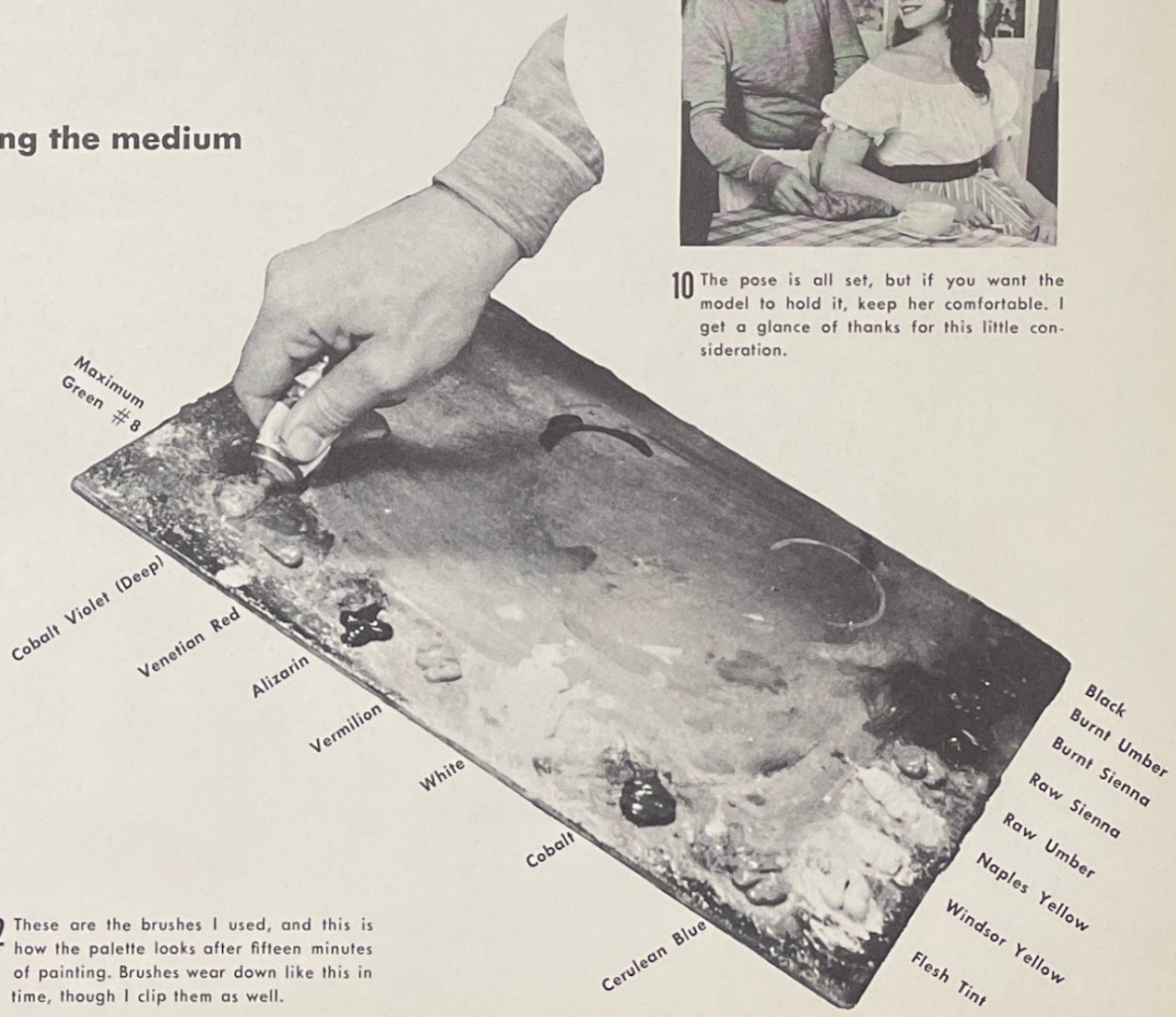
10 The pose is all set, but if you want the model to hold it, keep her comfortable. I get a glance of thanks for this little consideration.

Handling the medium

11 Here is my palette as I start to paint and the two brushes I use at the beginning.



12 These are the brushes I used, and this is how the palette looks after fifteen minutes of painting. Brushes wear down like this in time, though I clip them as well.



Portrait painting

13 My medium is turpentine. I also use turpentine to clean my brushes as I paint, but when I have finished I wash them thoroughly in kerosene.

14 I think it unwise to start work on a dead-white canvas, so I tone it with a mixture of umber washed down transparently with turps. You may tone your canvas with any color you wish, but I would suggest that you stick to grayed tones. If you use ordinary cigarette lighter fluid instead of turpentine, the toning-down will dry very quickly.

15 I wipe out streaks with a dry cloth.

16 Hold your brush in this manner. If you hold it as you would a pencil, you will not have full freedom of arm movement.

17 When the painting is carried about this far, I scrape it with a small palette knife. This tends to pull color and tone together, and unify the picture somewhat. It also eliminates unwanted heavy painting. If the paint gets too thick at the beginning it becomes unmanageable. Thickly painted areas are applied later and left unscraped.

18 The finger can be as useful as a brush in softening edges. In this way one can also flatten or pull together areas.

19 From time to time I spray "Retouch Varnish" directly into the wet paint. As a result the paint sets more quickly and becomes easier to handle. It also dries faster, allowing one to work into freshly painted areas without picking up the underlying coat. I use this varnish exclusively for this phase of painting.

Making the painting – step-by-step

20 After the wash of turps and oil paint is thoroughly dry on the canvas, I proceed to "lay in" the general lines of the composition. You will notice that I try to plan just the big areas of the picture, the big proportions. These are sketched with no regard for nicety of line or delicate draftsmanship. My only concern is to capture the powerful underlying structure of the picture. Notice also that I make no attempt to "draw" an eye, mouth, etc. I merely want to indicate where they are to be located. Up to this point I have been working with a No. 6 bristle brush, shown in Figure 11.

21 Next I lay in the big dark pattern with a larger bristle brush. I use sable water color brushes only at the very end, if at all. As I proceed I correct the drawing and make various changes.

Portrait painting

22 Some of the background toning is now painted in with a rather large brush. Next I work on the shadow side of the face. I am careful that all of the tones on face and background are halfway between the lightest light and the darkest dark. I have scumbled a bit of this lightest light on the blouse front in order to judge what tone is halfway between light and dark.

23 More tone is scumbled into the head. The original harsh darks of the eyes have been painted over with middle tone; their use as a guide has come to an end. I have reinserted the dark tone of the right eye with a single brush stroke, and I am trying for more of the middle tones throughout the painting.

24 Now I begin to soften things, pull the darks together. The lights get the same treatment. A few more tones of dark placed in the eyes make this part of the head look almost complete. Two or three more strokes and it will be. Next the nose and mouth. Not more than seven strokes of the brush were used to paint both of the eyes up to this point. You won't be able to do this right away. It will take much study of the human eye and still more practice in painting. But it is something to strive for. Incidentally, four strokes of the brush made the nose, about six the mouth. I realized at this point that the window would not work — the shape was too square and rigid. The effect of a large opening to the out-of-doors would be better. With a few strokes of the brush, I tell myself (and others) just how the hand will be. More tone is added to the background. These areas of tone in the background, both dark and light, are not put in "just anywhere"; they are very carefully considered. For example, the area of dark to the girl's left was added to vary an uninteresting section and to help balance the dark areas on the opposite side of the picture.

At this point I put the picture into the frame and continue to paint. I do a lot of scraping with the palette knife to the very end, where necessary.

25 Two more strokes are added to the eyes. I am now trying for the more delicate planes of the face. I am also experimenting with various forms, and trying to discover how the folds in the drapery will be arranged. I try out a saw-toothed edge on the drape. The cup and saucer get more work, and in the process they are moved and enlarged. Two strokes of light on top of the girl's fingers make the hand look more complete.

Portrait painting

26 The girl's right eyebrow is now placed. I saved this job until I was sure just where it was to go, and how light it should be. If I had painted it in earlier, corrections of other parts in that area might have wrecked it anyway. I wanted to be sure, also, that the flesh under and around the eyebrow was the right shape and tone before putting this stroke in. After all, eyebrows and eyelashes are not the solid part of the head that, let us say, the nose, mouth, or eyes are. In the beginning, suggest lightly where they might go — but finish them last. Now I'm beginning to finish areas, softening edges and painting in the more subtle tones. I use a variety of brushes, some large, and perhaps a few sables (both the flats and the round water color type).

27 I decided the saw-tooth drapery edge was annoying and detracted from the girl's head, so I simplified it. Although my model had no bracelets, I painted them in to break up the area on top of the arm. They add interest as well. The picture is finished.

This is a full-size detail of the finished painting. There are many things you can learn from a careful study of this picture which will help you improve your portraits.

Notice particularly the *values* and the *edges*. See how simply the light side of the face has been handled. This area is *not* a single flat value. If it was it would have no sense of form. However, the changes in value such as you see along the jaw and chin, the nostrils and the eye socket are very slight. If these values were not carefully controlled, or made any darker, they would destroy the sense of form. This same simplification applies to the handling of the neck, chest and shoulders. The values throughout this whole area are very close.

The *edges* between these areas of slightly different value, as well as the lights and shadows, are very soft and diffused to emphasize the fleshy quality of the form. There are no overworked halftones or highlights of white paint that would make this look like wood, metal or china. The edge between the figure and background is equally soft to emphasize the roundness and solidity of the form. The hair is painted very simply. The only modeling occurs on the right side of the head and in the areas where the hair falls over the shoulder and arm.

Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris

FRIEZ. Portrait of Fernand Fleuret

At first glance one might think this painting was half-finished; the background and clothing have been suggested in the most sketchy manner. The facial expression, the shape of the head, the gesture of the body have all been captured, however, and this is the essence of portraiture. Often it is better not to finish up unimportant details that would detract from the main consideration — the face. Notice how the composition is arranged to take the eye constantly back to the head.

Collection of Robert Lehman, New York

MARQUET. Sergeant of the Colonial Regiment

The artist has summed up a type of military personality by emphasizing the stolid, impassive monumentality of his subject. He has contributed to this impression by setting a rather small head on a stiff, elongated torso. To emphasize the silhouette he has kept the background perfectly plain. The face and hands stand out in spite of the strong color in epaulets and stripes because only they are modeled; the uniform is treated as a flat pattern.

Rosenberg and Stiebel Gallery, New York

RENOIR. Portrait of Coco

Only a sketch, perhaps, but how perfectly realized! The soft little features and the plump hands and arms are carefully modeled, but in a very simple manner. The hair seems drawn in detail, but actually a few well-considered strokes have done the job. How incomplete the portrait would have been without the two apparently careless marks that place the hair ribbon! Notice how everything in the painting invites the eye to follow the little girl's glance to the table top and the mysterious little object that is her whole concern.

Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art

MONET. Portrait of Dr. Leclenche

Monet let the good doctor assume what is obviously a characteristic pose, and painted him very directly. A small figure, he is given greater importance by letting his weight seem to distort the chair. The line across the background is important. It is positioned to help the chair support the figure, and is turned downward at the left to restore balance in the composition. Face and hands alone are fully modeled. Clothing is handled as an interesting pattern.

REMBRANDT
Flora
Courtesy The Metropolitan Museum of Art

The face of Rembrandt's housekeeper, Hendrickje Stoffels, the model he used for this portrait of the Greek goddess, *Flora*, lacked the idealized beauty customarily associated with classical subjects. Yet Rembrandt gave her somewhat irregular features remarkable character and interest by his use of lights massed against darks with soft, disappearing edges. The very irregularity of contours was heightened by the great hat, whose upswept leaves echo the line of the cheek. Strikingly demonstrated is the wide possible range of flesh colors in light — from deep purple-browns to the most delicate off-whites.

Improvising from the model — by R.F. (Robert Fawcett)

From a snapshot of myself in a rather sceptical mood, I show you four stages in rendering a head. These are done in black ink, later diluted with water in a saucer. The important thing is the fact that the approach is free and moderately inventive.

The traced lines are all I need to start; then, beginning with black on the most important facts I let the head develop.

Now from the same snapshot, but with characters in mind, I have painted these other heads, with much greater invention. These are freely done with a minimum of pencilling, in opaque water color. This first character is a portly "colonel" type. You see the difference between slavish copying and free invention. With the character in mind before I start, I merely consult the snap for facts of light and construction which are common to all faces with this expression.

It is still basically the same face but transformed this time into an entirely different character than the colonel. This could be a bartender or a western character. These are not meant to be finished drawings. They are merely quick diagrams to show you a method of using, and improvising upon, copy.

Again you see it is from the same snap, but this time converted into one of the strange exotic-looking characters I like to draw. The original photo was chiefly an expression. Long practice at drawing allows me to draw heads with my eyes closed, but this particular supercilious or sceptical expression is a fleeting thing and may be an important element in an illustration. I consider this a legitimate use of the camera. Nobody accuses Brahms of plagiarism because he chose a theme of Haydn's upon which to improvise his set of variations. The invention and spontaneity of the variations are the important things, and so it will be with you when you use the photograph intelligently and with imagination. But without learning to draw, you will never be able to do this successfully, so always be drawing.

PAUL CÉZANNE
Portrait of Louis Guillaume
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
Chester Dale Collection

The striking sense of sculptural fullness
in Cézanne's *Portrait of Louis Guillaume* is underlined by
its combination of symmetry and asymmetry. The form of the head is
nearly egg-shaped yet boldly varied in its two halves both
by subtle changes in individual features and by
a shifting of planes to the right. Accentuating the
twisting central axis of the face is the incisive arc connecting
nose and eyebrow, where blue shadow is
sharply overlaid by an impasto of warm ochers. An asymmetrical scheme
is carried out in the background as well, with the mass
of the figure swinging closer to the right edge
and anchored at the left by the curving chair back.

Portrait painting

Collection Mr. and Mrs. Lee A. Ault

ROUAULT. Self Portrait

An artist who has developed a strong style tends to see everything around him in the terms he uses constantly. Rouault presented judges, prostitutes, and saints in the same harsh contrasts of light and dark, generalized or even distorted forms. When he looks at himself he retains the same approach. In this self-portrait he has captured a likeness; but his method of handling form, light, and color reveal more of the artist's personality than the impassive features he has painted.

Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art

FLINCK. A Woman Asleep

Often informal sketches come closer to real portraiture than more ambitious, finished paintings. This drawing has a casual charm found only in rapid sketches. It communicates convincingly the personality of the subject, primarily because it is so unpremeditated.

DÜRER. Study of Hands

From these magnificent studies of hands we can fairly read the personality of the sitter. Even if you do not plan to paint the hands of your portrait subject it will pay you to examine them carefully. They will reveal qualities of personality you will then notice mirrored in the face.

Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art

GOYA. Self-Portrait

Eyes, nose, and mouth sum up personality. If these features are accurately delineated, all else is of secondary importance and can be suggested in generalized terms. The hair, as in this case, serves as a background to set off the features. Simple as this little sketch is, it captures a strength of personality which might well be lacking in a more formal statement.

PICASSO. Portrait of Igor Stravinsky

Here Picasso was drawing his impression of the composer who, in music, has matched the artist's achievement in paint. Notice how Picasso has given him monumental stature. The body is drawn large, the head small. Nose, ears, and mouth are exaggerated in size. This is a demonstration of how an approach bordering on caricature can often result in a more revealing, expressive portrait than a literal recording of appearance could possibly achieve.

Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art

WATTEAU. Study for Le Mezzetin

This portrait sketch was done as a study for a famous painting now in the Metropolitan Museum. The unusual pose reflects the wistfulness Watteau wanted to depict. It is very difficult to draw a foreshortened head in this position unless you know what is "going on" beneath the skin, and have a good knowledge of bone and muscle structure.

FAMOUS ARTISTS PAINTING COURSE

Student Work

Lesson 7 -- Portrait Painting

ASSIGNMENT -- To Mail to the School for Criticism:

Your assignment for this lesson is to paint a portrait. This portrait can portray either a relative, a friend, or an acquaintance whom you have asked to sit for you. Or, if you prefer, you can send us a self-portrait -- a painting of yourself done by looking into a mirror.

Make this an interesting picture -- not just an isolated study of a head. Arrange your subject so that you can include either or both hands, so that we can see what you've learned about that part of the lesson. Be sure to study the section on clothing or drapery in Lesson 8, Pages 15-31, before you begin this painting.

As we pointed out in the discussion beginning on Page 3, capturing a photographic likeness is one type of portraiture -- but it is by no means the only type, nor is it the most interesting. Far more important is the possibility of capturing the true personality and character of the subject as you feel it to be. Each person has distinct characteristics of feature which reveal and in a sense reflect inner spiritual qualities. It is the business of the portraitist to sense the essential personality of the subject, and to point up, and even exaggerate, those subtle differences of feature and expression that add up to a forceful and revealing characterization. Read over the introductory pages on Ben Stahl's "Painting a portrait" -- Pages 26, 27, and 28 -- for a fuller exposition of this idea.

Equally important as a factor in any creative portrait painting is the style and personality of the artist. Some artists attempt to capture personality by exact physical likeness. Others go far afield from realistic painting and express their own personal reaction to the subject. Often the artist, by setting down his own emotional feeling about the person he is portraying, can present the true personality of the sitter more accurately than he could in a careful realistic record. For a variety of portrait styles and approaches, study the various examples shown on Pages 3, 40, and 44.

The relationship between the outward appearance of the world and our inner vision is of constant concern to the true artist. Our purpose is to perceive and capture these intimations of reality on our canvas. Since we can't possibly reproduce the three-dimensional world of nature on a two-dimensional surface we must call upon illusion. And because of the limitations of our medium, we must make every effort to heighten the illusion. The clever painter, through a knowing use of form, color, and texture, and by applying the proven fundamentals of composition, can make the observer feel that the painting is, in its own way, more real than nature itself.

In achieving this you must rely to a large extent on intuition. Intuition is that flash of insight clarifying what is already partially understood. As you develop in craftsmanship and technique you will probably experience this exciting feeling of perception. You must learn to invite the experience, and take advantage of such insights when they occur.

You may wonder why we have introduced these observations at this point. We mention these things here because in approaching the portrait your attention is bound to be centered at first on technical details -- establishing

(Over)

the pose, composing from it, trying for a likeness, etc. But even though you are involved in technical problems, we want you to remember that what you are <u>really</u> reaching for is the magnificent, intangible quality we call "personality."

* * * *

Your painting should be in full color.
Work in any medium (except pastel), on a surface suitable to the medium.
Make the painting 16 x 20 inches in size.
Be sure the painting is thoroughly dry before you mail it in.
Do not mat or frame any picture you send us for criticism.
If you work on a stretched canvas, remove the stretchers before placing the canvas in the mailing container.
On the back of your picture, be sure to letter:
Your name
Your student number
Your address
Your assignment number
Mail the painting to

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